



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 235 William St., N. Y.

No. 77.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL AND THE RENEGADE QUEEN



"I VOW BY HIGH HEAVEN, BUFFALO BILL, TO TRACK YOU TO YOUR DEATH!"



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Price Five Cents.

Buffalo Bill and the Renegade Queen;

OR,

DEADLY HAND'S STRANGE DUEL.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

"By heaven! it is not the Deserter Sergeant, but Buffalo Bill! He has been a spy in the band and tracked them to death. Ha! there is my gallant Captain Fred Forrester, and he, too, comes with a noose in his hand, but not for my neck, for I shall kill him now and end it!"

As the speaker uttered the words a rifle went slowly up to his shoulder, and the aim was upon the form of a man in uniform, with straps on his shoulders to denote that he was an officer.

But the trigger was not touched by the index finger, and the weapon was quickly lowered with the words:

"No, no, it would be a mercy to kill him, so he shall live, for I shall make his living worse than death.

"My God! why do I linger here when all is lost? I must not be taken," and the speaker glided back into the shadow of the timber, and disappeared in the darkness.

The one who spoke these words, uttered with feelings of bitterest hate, was a woman, almost a child, and a beautiful one she seemed, as the light of a flickering fire had fallen upon her face, and revealed, also, her form, clad in a riding habit.

The scene she had gazed upon was an appalling one for men were struggling for life and death but a short

distance away, and the shouts and oaths of maddened humanity mingled with the rattle of revolvers.

It was a canyon, which might be called a fertile valley, for there were trees, meadowlands and swiftly running brook, all overhung by lofty cliffs that surrounded it.

The canyon ended abruptly at one end, and narrowed to a pass between cliffs at the other.

Where the woman stood was a rude cabin hidden in a clump of timber, and in the background were several horses.

Entering the cabin, she dragged out a pack-saddle, which she hastily put upon the back of one of the horses.

Upon another a side-saddle was placed, and leaping to her seat, the woman rode away from the cabin, leading the pack-horse and skirting the timber in the background so as to avoid notice.

Soon after she rode out through the pass and as silently as a phantom disappeared in the gloom.

And in the canyon the fight continued until cries for mercy rang out and the rattle of the revolvers was hushed.

What followed were death scenes, and an execution that sent a guilty soul into eternity.

But while the one thus slain faced death, he had said in a voice in which there was no tremor of fear:

"Buffalo Bill, you have given your pledge to me to see that my wife, now to be known as the Renegade Queen

of the Sioux, shall receive the letter I have intrusted to your hands?"

"I have," was the firm response.

"Buffalo Bill, I trust you, though you brought me to this fate. I am ready!"

They were the last words of Snow Face, the white chief of the Sioux, for a platoon of cavalymen sent their bullets into his breast.

The group was a strange one, and men were there whose names have become known throughout the land—heroes of the border who will long live in poem and story.

It was the end of a trail which Buffalo Bill had pledged himself to follow to the end, and he had kept his pledge.

Assuming to be an outlawed soldier, known as the Deserter Sergeant, whom he closely resembled in face and form, who had often been called the great scout's "double," and whom he had himself slain, he had joined a band of road-agents known as the Brimstone Brotherhood, the chief of whom, tracked to death, lay but a few rods away from where Buffalo Bill stood.

Impersonating the Deserter Sergeant, he had visited the Sioux village, over which Snow Face, the renegade, ruled, and he, too, had been lured to his death there in that canyon, the outlaws' retreat.

Gathered about in groups, some of them guarding outlaw prisoners, were a score of cavalymen, men of the U. S. Cavalry, from Fort Fairview, who had been detailed on special service under the scout, and had been known as Buffalo Bill's Boys in Blue.

Bending over a wounded man, tenderly caring for him, was a man of superb physique, who had won fame as the surgeon scout, and who yet lives, in the person of Dr. Frank Powell, the hero of many a border romance, and whose life has been the most exciting and romantic of romances.

Not far from him, silent, standing with arms folded upon his broad breast, like a statue of a soldier, was an army officer, whose life was under a cloud.

His name Captain Fred Forrester, and he had long been suspected of being in league with outlaws, but recently the confession of a dying outlaw, Captain Brimstone, had cleared him.

His stern, determined face is strikingly handsome, and his carriage superb, while his manners, though courteous, are cold and reserved.

He, too, has come to the end of a trail that he has followed long and ruthlessly, and the dead outlaw chief lying at his feet almost, in the far bygone, when a boy, he had called brother, and looked up to as all that was good and true, to in the end be cruelly deceived.

Apart from the group, half shrinking from sight, was a slender, graceful form, one whose rescue had just been accomplished, for she had, with the beautiful traitress who had led her into a trap, been kidnaped by Captain Brimstone, the road-agent.

And, as she stood there, pale, but beautiful, her eyes timidly sought the face of the young captain, he who had been under a cloud among his fellowmen—who had been called the outcast officer, and yet whose brave spirit had not broken under the weight of infamy and humiliation cast upon him.

She had heard the outlaw chief's last words, his confes-

sion that Fred Forrester was not guilty as accused, and she wondered, as she gazed upon the stern, handsome face, why it was not full of sunshine.

And so in that canyon men were dying as the moments went by, graves were dug and filled in, and then came inquiries for the beautiful traitress, who had acted as the tool of the outlaw chief, and visiting the fort, had lured Kate Kennerley, a belle and heiress, into a trap, pretending to be herself a victim also of the kidnapers.

So search was made for the traitress, whose childlike beauty had been her strongest card, and then it was discovered that she had departed from the canyon, fled into the trackless mountains, alone, to escape from those who might be merciless to her.

But they dreamed not that she had escaped for revenge; they had not measured the strength of her implacable will, nor fathomed the deep depravity of her woman's heart.

CHAPTER II.

THE RENEGADE QUEEN.

A strange place for a woman, and a beautiful one, too, in the village of a redskin tribe.

Yet her surroundings are not altogether Indian, for her home is a comfortable log cabin, with several rooms, with a piazza across its front, where swings a hammock, and where several rustic easy-chairs are found.

The furniture is not such as is found in an Indian tepee, but better than what many a cabin of a well-to-do farmer or rancher contains.

That it was taken on raids, pillaged from trains carrying the baggage of some commandant to his frontier post, did not make it a whit less comfortable to the cabin's mistress.

The cabin looked like the home of refinement, though about it, a mile or two away, were scattered the villages of the Sioux, over whom the former chief held sway, for it was the one-time home of Snow Face, the renegade.

The woman upon the piazza was his wife.

The scene from her home was a grand one, of valley, winding brook, meadow lands, a tepee village in the distance, herds of ponies feeding here and there, and a background of lofty mountains.

The cabin was at the head of the valley, and was sheltered by overhanging cliffs fringed with mountain pines.

Sketches in pencil, water-colors, and other bits of handiwork, were upon the cabin walls.

What had been an officer's loss had proven a renegade's gain, and the latter had enjoyed the comfort thereof.

The woman was reading, and was seated in a rude but comfortable rocking-chair the while, her eyes now and then turning from the pages of her book to the beauty of the scenery before her, the valley growing dark far away, as the sun sank nearer the mountain range.

She was clad in a suit of buckskin, heavily beaded, fringed and worked with colored porcupine-quills.

The skirt was short, displaying leggins incasing neatly-turned nether limbs, while moccasins were upon her feet.

Strings of beads were about her neck, and in her belt were a pair of silver-mounted revolvers, one on either hip.

The form was the perfection of symmetry and grace, and the head was set haughtily upon the shapely shoulders.

Her hair, of red-gold hue, was braided, and hung be-

low her waist, while a jaunty head-dress of feathers rested upon her brow like a crown.

The face was beautiful, and as innocent looking as a child's; but, for all that, there was decision of character in it most strongly marked.

Her eyes, large, lustrous, yet dreamy, were dark, and shaded by long black lashes, presenting a striking contrast to her auburn hair, and her complexion, pure as a lily, was yet bronzed and tinted with perfect health.

Such was Irma Dean, the wife of the renegade chief, whom the reader has seen executed in a canyon, under the carbines of a platoon of cavalymen.

It was several days after the scene in the canyon, and she was alone in her home among the mountains, her red-skin servant having gone over to one of the villages of her people.

Though reading, the woman did not seem wholly interested in her book, for she raised her eyes often from the pages to glance down the valley.

Suddenly her eyes became riveted upon an object, which soon proved to be a horse and rider.

"Ah! I thought it was Douglass; but it is not he!"

She sprang to her feet, and took a glass from a hook near, leveling it upon the horseman.

Then her face paled, and she cried, excitedly:

"My God! What brings that man back here?"

She replaced the glass in the bracket, cast her book from her, and sank into her chair, as though from weakness.

Her beautiful face was now white, and her lips quivered nervously, while her eyes glowed with a strange light.

The horseman, meanwhile, had come nearer, and proved to be a white man.

He was well mounted and armed, and would have been taken for Buffalo Bill had he been in buckskin.

Instead, he was dressed in a cavalry uniform, wore the stripes of an orderly-sergeant upon his arm, and his black sombrero was encircled by a gold cord.

He rode with the air of a man who knew that he was constantly face to face with death.

His eyes scrutinized the cabin and its surroundings as he advanced, and a close observer would have seen that he was ready for instant fight or flight.

He saw the woman, yet appeared not to do so, and soon after rode up to a tree, and, throwing the rein of his horse over a limb, dismounted.

Approaching the piazza, he did so with his rifle swung to his side, and his hands conveniently near the butts of his revolvers.

Ascending the steps, he raised his sombrero, and said, politely:

"We meet again, madam."

"May I ask why, sir?" the woman demanded, coldly.

She was calm now, yet very pale.

"I am here on a mission to see you, Mrs. Russell," and there was a touch of sadness in his tone.

"Do not call me by that name, sir! How dare you do so?" and her face flushed with anger.

"You are Mrs. Russell, I know. I have come to give you pain, I know, for I am the bearer of sad tidings to you."

"Good God! My husband! He is dead?"

"He is, madam."

"And you are his murderer! By the heaven above, but you shall die for this, Buffalo Bill!" and the renegade queen drew a revolver from her belt and leveled it full at the man before her.

CHAPTER III.

A WOMAN'S OATH.

There was determination in the woman's eye to kill, and the man whose heart she covered with her revolver realized it.

There was no quiver in the small hand that held the extended revolver, and the eye was running along the sight for deadly aim, when, quick as a flash, the man dropped to the ground, and the bullet flew over his head.

In an instant, he had seized the revolver, and wrenched it from the woman's hand, while he said, sternly:

"Hear what I have to say, madam!"

"Don't force me to be cruel toward a woman, for I would not be."

He took the other revolver from her belt, and she sank down into her chair, her form quivering, her eyes glaring at him, while her teeth almost cut into her lips to force herself to calmness.

"I will listen," she said, with an effort.

"I came here as the Deserter Sergeant, and yet, as you suspected, I am Buffalo Bill.

"I took advantage of my striking resemblance to the deserter, whom I killed in a personal encounter, to play his part, and, as such, I was admitted to membership in the band of the Brimstone Brotherhood.

"I entered their ranks as a spy, to destroy them, and was sent here by their chief, whom you knew as Edmund Allyn.

"I formed an alliance between your husband and Captain Brimstone, and then I struck my blow.

"But it was not as successful as I wished, for Allyn escaped, and it did not include the capture of your husband.

"I tried again, with a special detail of soldiers, known as my Boys in Blue, and this time the result was all I could hope."

"My husband is dead!" and the words were uttered with enforced calmness.

"You shall hear all, madam. I again played the part of the Deserter Sergeant, and met Captain Brimstone, also playing a part, that of an itinerant parson.

"As such, in company with a woman, who is a beautiful fiend, from all I know of her, he went to Fort Fairview and kidnaped a young lady, who is rich, and able to pay a large ransom.

"This was while I was here, your husband's prisoner, for he suspected me, as you know.

"You were good enough to set me free. He followed on my trail, and, by a strange combination of circumstances, I met an officer on the trail of the kidnapers of Miss Kinnerley, and the result was that we went to the retreat near of my Boys in Blue, ambushed your husband and his redskin warriors, who were upon my trail, and captured the chief."

"Then, he is not dead?" almost shrieked the woman.

"Be calm, I beg of you, and hear all."

"Go on, sir, for I am perfectly calm," was the answer,

and she spoke the truth; but it was a calmness that was dangerous.

"We then went on to the canyon, where Captain Brimstone had his retreat, and surprised him, with his men."

"And Edmund Allyn—I mean Captain Brimstone?"

"Was mortally wounded, and died soon after."

"Ah!"

"Before dying, he made a confession, to the effect that he had killed the rich old gentleman whom your husband was arrested for the murder of, and had plotted so that he would be suspected."

"Thank God, Douglass was innocent of that crime, as he always said he was."

"Yes, Edmund Allyn committed the murder, got the money, and intended that Douglass Dean should hang for it, and thus he would make you his wife."

"You pledged yourself to marry him, if he would aid Dean to escape, which he did; but you broke faith with him, fled with the man you loved, and left all to believe that you had been drowned."

"That was why you and your husband dreaded Captain Brimstone as you did."

"I pity your husband, for he was embittered by the charge against him, and fled with you to the West, and, somehow, became the white chief of the Sioux."

"Allyn came West, to save himself from the gallows for crimes committed; he became a gambler, and then a road-agent, chief of the Brimstone Brotherhood."

"I trailed him to his death in Eagle Canyon, three nights ago, and your husband also met his death there."

She gave a moan, but said nothing, and Buffalo Bill continued:

"I had my orders to execute him, and also Edmund Allyn, when captured, and so I detailed a platoon of my Boys in Blue as an execution squad."

"Your husband asked to write you a letter, and I gave him my pledge that I would deliver it to you; hence I am here, for, still believed to be the Deserter Sergeant by your warriors on sentinel duty, I passed through their lines unsuspected."

"Here is the letter, and I ask you to give me your pledge that I shall go free from this place, and unfollowed by your braves until I have been gone several hours."

"If you refuse, I shall destroy this letter, and, as you are in my power, I can bind and gag you, and thus make my escape. Have I your pledge?"

She arose, calmly, while her eyes turned wistfully upon the letter.

The look of utter misery in her face touched Buffalo Bill to the heart, and he said:

"You will give me the pledge I ask, will you not? For God knows I pity you, and do not wish to act roughly toward you."

"I know that your love brought you to these wilds, and I now know that, being accused of crime when innocent, made your husband what he became—a renegade to his own race, chief of a redskin tribe. Will you let me go unmolested?"

"Yes, I pledge you to do so. But did you have my husband shot?"

"I did so in the discharge of my orders and duty, and he died like a man."

"I believe that, sir, for he knew no fear. You can go

now; but, Buffalo Bill, hear my oath," and, dropping upon her knees, the Renegade Queen raised her clasped hands, and cried:

"I vow, by High Heaven, Buffalo Bill, to track you to your death! And, when you are in my power, may God have mercy upon you, for I will not."

"Give me that letter from my dead husband, my murdered husband, and go!"

The scout placed the letter in her hand, and turned away.

An hour after he had passed the sentinels at the outpost of the Indian village, and was riding through the darkness back to Fort Fairview.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LIFTED CLOUD.

Among the frontier posts from north to south, none were pleasanter, or more sought after by officers and men as a station, than was Fort Fairview.

Its situation was delightful, for the prairies stretched away from its walls to the southward, and rolling timber lands were to the northward.

There was a river, with bold, picturesque scenery, brooks, valleys, and hills round about, and thus the surroundings were most charming to the eye.

It was, at the time we write of, a post of danger, however, and the headquarters for a string of posts and forts stretching north and south for several hundred miles.

It was strongly built, of stockade walls and earth forts; there were several batteries stationed there, a regiment of cavalry, and the crack one of the army, too, with a couple of regiments of infantry, and a company of scouts, with Buffalo Bill as chief, who had been detailed there when he left Fort Taos, after his round-up of the road-agents in that vicinity.

Colonel Cassidy, the commandant of the post, was every inch a soldier, a bachelor, and a courteous gentleman.

He did his duty, and expected every man in command to do the same.

The officers' quarters about the fort were large and well located, the barracks all that the soldiers could desire, and then came a little settlement known as "the village," where the sutler had his store and home, the teamsters and hangers-on were quartered, with the wives of the married soldiers to add to the community.

So it was that Fort Fairview was a pleasant abiding-place, and yet one there had found it a hell on earth, to speak forcibly.

This one was a young man who had been a favorite with his equals, a pet of the ladies, and the idol of his men.

He was called a dandy, and yet was acknowledged to be the best soldier in the command, for he never neglected his duties, though, when off duty, devoted himself wholly to pleasure.

Handsome as an Adonis, formed like a Hercules, courteous, elegant and dashing, all could not but admire; but he was known to be fast, "rapid as the wind," the junior officers said.

He had a stable full of fine horses, his quarters were furnished like the boudoir of a city belle, for they contained paintings, bric-a-brac, curios, and any amount of

trophies of the hunt and travel, with guns, rifles, revolvers, and swords.

He had a cook, a valet and groom, and lived luxuriously.

It was said that he had been born rich, but had been cheated out of his fortune by a guardian, yet little was known of his past, other than that he hailed from the South somewhere, and had stood number one in his class at West Point.

His pay did not, of course, support him in luxury, so it was known that he gambled, and was a bold, extravagant, if not a reckless, player.

He was said to be a sad flirt, too, for there was a magnetism about him that seemed to win women at once.

But his gambling, his orgies, and flirtations were condoned, and he still lived on in popularity, until one night he went to the rescue of a wagon-train, hemmed in by Snow Face, the renegade, and his braves.

He gallantly made the rescue, but Captain Kennerley, the officer in command of the train, was mortally wounded, and intrusted to the young officer a large sum of government money and five thousand dollars belonging to his niece, Kate Kennerley, an heiress, then at Fort Fairview.

The young officer became separated from his command, and returned to the fort, after several days, with the story that he had been robbed of the treasure by road-agents.

But he also stated that he had met Gambler Gaul, a noted sport of the border, who had paid to him a debt due him of five thousand dollars, and with this he liquidated a number of pressing debts due.

"Then 'Madam Rumor' set her tongue to wagging, and the 'idol of the army' found himself suddenly accused of having hidden the money intrusted to his keeping, and dark stories were floating about against him.

So great was the pressure that he was court-martialed, but acquitted; but the verdict did not raise the cloud from about him.

He came out of that terrible ordeal a changed man, cutting those who had meant to cut him; his horses and household effects were sold, except those he actually needed; his valet and cook were dismissed, and his groom had to do treble duty, and his quarters were closed to all who had been his friends, with two exceptions, and they were Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Frank Powell.

His men and the people of the fort yet remained true as steel to him, and he ever had a salute and kind word for them, where his bow was freezing to his superiors and equals.

He shunned no one, devoted himself to his duty, and won the confidence and esteem of his commandant.

There were three others who were his friends, too, and these were Dunbar Dunton, the major of his regiment, and his beautiful, young wife, and Kate Kennerley, the belle of the fort, and the very one whose money he had been accused of appropriating.

So it was that Fred Forrester, captain of the gallant—th Cavalry, became known as the "Outcast Officer," and bore all in stern silence, suffered uncomplainingly, and bided his time.

Still, appearances continued against him, for a boy bugler, who had been with the rescued train, had been discovered to have formerly been known to the captain, and

rumor had it that he had been forced to leave the fort under orders of Fred Forrester.

Believing in his innocence, both Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell had taken the trail to solve the mystery hanging over the young officer, and the solution came in Eagle Canyon, where Captain Brimstone and Snow Face, the renegade, were hunted to death.

Then it became known from the lips of Edmund Allyn, alias Gambler Gaul and Captain Brimstone, that he was the stepbrother of Fred Forrester, had robbed him of his fortune, as his guardian, for he was much older, and yet, when they had met on the plains, had never been betrayed by him.

He confessed, too, how his men had robbed the young officer of the government treasure and Miss Kennerley's money, and, in a fit of virtue, how he had kept the saddlebags intact to restore to the one he had so wronged, and thus the sums had been returned to the paymaster at the fort and heiress, and which act, which Forrester could not explain, had been misconstrued into the belief that he had had the treasure bag hidden all the while, and brought it back only under pressure to remove the cloud upon him.

And so back to the fort went the Boys in Blue, under command of Captain Forrester, while Buffalo Bill went off alone to keep his pledge to the renegade chief.

The Boys in Blue escorted the rescued maiden, Kate Kennerley, and, upon arrival at the fort, the truth came out, the cloud was lifted, and Fred Forrester had won his triumph.

But another mystery enshrouded him, for, who was this "boy bugler" who had proved to have been a woman, masquerading as "Miss Meserole," the ally of Captain Brimstone, to kidnap Kate Kennerley?

Who was "Miss Meserole," and what was she to Fred Forrester?

That mystery the young officer would not solve, so he yet remained "under a cloud."

CHAPTER V.

A WOMAN "CHIPS IN."

"Halt! Brakes on hard, and hands up!"

Rainbow Rob obeyed these commands, startling, terse, and threatening, that rung out from the roadside, with the promptness of a soldier on parade.

Rainbow Rob was an old driver in the Rockies, and had, to use slang, "been thar before."

He knew just what such a command on the Overland coach trails meant, and, if not promptly obeyed, that a volley of bullets would follow, and he would be made the recipient of leaden souvenirs.

So he drew rein, put his foot hard on the brakes, and then held his hands over his head.

He had taken the box at the last station, the commencement of his run, which was a short one, but severe and perilous, and could only be driven by the most skillful hand with the ribbons.

He had six-in-hand—a splendid team, that knew their master as well as he knew them.

The last driver had told him that there were four men inside and a woman, and that was all the acquaintance he had with them.

One of those inside was a miner, another looked like a

speculator from the East, a third was a Mexican, well-dressed, but evil-faced, and the fourth "Judge" Jessop, the new landlord of "The Roost," in Gold Pocket City, whither the coach was bound.

The fifth passenger was a woman, wearing a long cloak, and veiled.

Rainbow Rob had won his cognomen on account of his hair, which was burned red around the edges under his hat, was black on top, except where a tuft of snow-white hair grew on his forehead.

He was a powerful fellow, good-natured, feared nothing, and drove with a skill that no other man on the Overland could equal.

He gazed quickly at the toll-gatherers who had brought him to a halt.

As to recognizing them, it was impossible, for the two were at the heads of the leaders, and the man who stepped to the side of the coach wore a mask.

There were three outlaws in sight, but how many were not visible Rainbow Rob did not know, nor did he intend to discover by attempting to disobey the command.

The last driver had hinted that he thought he carried a rich party inside, and Rainbow Rob felt very sorry that they should come to grief upon his end of the line.

But, then, what could he do about it?

"Rainbow, you have dust aboard to-day, and I want it!" said the outlaw leader.

"Help yerself, if they is willing," was the surly response.

But, ere the man could make a step toward the coach, the door flew open, and a feminine form appeared, while sharply rang out the words:

"Gentlemen, I chip in here and call you! Hands up, pard, or I play my sixes for trumps!"

The outlaw leader and his men were so taken aback at the vision confronting them that they stood undecided and seemingly disconcerted.

It was a woman, and yet apparently scarcely more than eighteen.

She had a wealth of auburn hair, and eyes as black as jet, while every feature of her face was perfect.

Her form was slender, graceful, and clad in a velvet dress of the Mexican pattern, slashed on the sides and trimmed with buttons and lace, and her head was surmounted by a sombrero, richly embroidered.

A strange, beautiful, picturesque creature she was, and one who "meant biz," as Rainbow Rob afterward remarked, for her "sixes," which she was to play as trumps, were in her hands, leveled and cocked.

"I've got him dead if he winks, or if the other cattle raise a gun, so drive on, Rainbow Rob, or rush them down, as you think best."

And the woman held the leader covered as she spoke, while he dared not raise the weapons which he held in his hand, and his two followers would not move without their chief's orders.

CHAPTER VI.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY.

Buffalo Bill had insisted upon terms with the Renegade Queen, for he had been going pretty steadily the past month, and had no desire for a running fight of a couple of days with redskin pursuers.

If he could gain start enough to let darkness come on before his trail was taken, he felt that he had the night before him, and need not dread pursuit.

So he had demanded the pledge from the queen that he should have a good start.

Had she not given it, he would have done as he threatened—bound, gagged, and left her so, and made his escape, for he knew, if found there by warriors as her foe, he would have not the slightest chance for life.

So he made his terms, and she agreed to them, giving her pledge, yet also taking oath that she would hunt him down for having taken the life of her husband.

He left her, and the Indian outposts, regarding him as the Deserter Sergeant, the ally of their chief, allowed him to pass through the canyons without suspicion or hindrance.

The scout at once set off for the fort, and rode swiftly on until he came to a broad trail.

Into this he turned, and, reaching a stream, he did not cross it, but followed the water-course for several miles, when darkness had fallen, and he determined to camp until nearly dawn.

He was looking for a place to turn out of the stream, when he caught sight of a firelight.

Instantly he drew rein, and glanced, earnestly, in the direction of the light.

The murmur of the waters, here and there dashing over pebble-bed and among rocks, he knew had prevented the splash of his horse moving down the stream having been heard.

So he once more moved along, keeping well in the shadow of the trees upon the farther shore of the shallow stream.

By the clear starlight, he easily picked his way, but moved slowly, to let the waters drown the splash made by his horse.

The firelight grew larger, and he soon saw that it was built in an open space upon the bank of the stream.

A horse was staked out near the creek, and another stood close to the campfire, while some one was taking a pack-saddle from its back.

The scout regarded the scene most attentively for a while, and then said to himself:

"It is the boy bugler, Miss Meserole, or whatever he or she chooses to call herself or himself. I will pay him or her a visit in camp."

So saying, he rode on past the camp, and, leaving the stream, staked his horse out about a hundred yards from the fire.

Then he moved on foot to the vicinity of the camp, and, when the lonely camper-out returned to the fire from staking his pack-horse out, he suddenly confronted the tall form of the scout.

He had stepped out from the shadow of a tree directly into the firelight, and his form and face were distinctly revealed.

The boy bugler started, and dropped his hand upon a revolver, while a startled cry broke from his lips.

He possessed a slender, graceful form, clad in uniform, with the insignia of a regimental bugler denoting the rank he had held.

Handsome he certainly was, and very attractive, with

his top-boots, spurs, uniform, and fearless face, as beautiful as a woman's.

A minute he stood, regarding the scout, his motion to draw his revolver checked by Buffalo Bill's calmly-uttered words:

"Don't draw that weapon, or I shall break your arm with a bullet!"

Then the lips of the bugler parted, with a cry of joy, and the words followed as he sprang forward:

"Benson, my brother! Do you not know me? I am Ruby, your sister!"

The scout started back, but, quick as a flash, she had sprung toward him, thrown her arms about his neck, and kissed him.

"I am not your brother," he said, in an embarrassed way, when he could collect himself sufficiently to speak.

"You do not know me, brother, in this dress, for I am not a boy, but a woman—your sister Ruby. I came West to seek you, and— But never mind now who else, for we will talk that over after a while; but why do you not speak?"

The scout was deeply moved. His face had paled, and he seemed about to speak, and yet checked himself each time.

At last he said:

"I know you are not a youth, and that at the fort you were known as Billie Blew, the Boy Bugler; but I am not Benson Roberts, as you believe."

"Great God! You are not he whom men call the Deserter Sergeant?" and the woman started back, in evident terror.

"No, I am not the Deserter Sergeant."

"Then you can be but one other!"

"Who?"

"Buffalo Bill!"

"I am Buffalo Bill, and not the Deserter Sergeant."

CHAPTER VII.

THE GRAVE BETWEEN THEM.

"You are, then, Buffalo Bill?" and the woman spoke with strange calmness, as she gazed fixedly into the face of the scout, upon whom the light of the campfire fell, revealing his features and form as distinctly as by daylight.

"I am; and you are not a youth, as all at the fort believed?"

"I confessed that when I told you I was your sister."

"I knew it before."

"Ah! And how?"

"I know you as the one who played the rôle of Miss Meserole."

"Ha! You know this?"

"I will tell you just what I do know of you, and see what you care to contradict."

"Pray, do so," and there was a sneer in the tone in which she spoke, and her hand again dropped upon the butt of her revolver.

"Take your hand off that weapon, for, though I will not kill you, being a woman, I will send a bullet through your arm if you attempt to draw it."

"If you know me, you will take my advice," and Buffalo Bill drew his revolver and held it in his hand, as though to carry out his threat.

"I do know you, as the quickest and deadest shot on the border.

"I will not draw my revolver."

"I will not trust you, so unbuckle your belt, and place it yonder, ten feet away."

"I will not!"

"Obey me!"

"And thus give you the advantage?"

"I have it now, and intend to keep it."

"I will not obey!"

"Let me tell you that I have just come from the Sioux village, and that there are warriors upon my trail in large numbers.

"I wish to see you to a place of safety before I leave you, for, if you are on your way to an Overland station, as I believe, you are off your track, and lost.

"I mean you no harm, but I am determined that you, in a fit of passion, shall not kill or wound me.

"Will you obey?"

There was something in the calm, commanding manner of the scout that forced obedience, and the woman unbuckled her belt and placed it some distance off.

Then she returned, and faced the scout, and said:

"I have yielded, so tell me what you know of me?"

"You are the sister of the man known as the Deserter Sergeant."

"I said as much."

"You came West, perhaps, to see your brother, who was a fugitive from justice, but more from another motive."

"Name it."

"I do not know it; but, taking advantage of your skill as a cornet player, you joined a westward-bound train, and was promised by the captain in command a position as bugler.

"To that captain, Lucius Kennerley, you told stories about an army officer, poisoning him against him so that he did not longer regard him as a man of honor."

"To whom do you refer?"

"To Captain Fred Forrester, who rescued your train, saving all from massacre.

"You got a position at the fort as bugler of the —th Cavalry, and stories began to go the rounds against this same officer."

"You did not believe them?"

"No, I did not; nor did several others; but Forrester became a social outcast, from the charges made against him, and I believe you instigated all."

"Why?"

"I do not know, and it is none of my business, so I do not care; but he forced you to leave the fort, and you met, in some way, Brimstone, the road-agent, and allied yourself to him for pure devilry.

"In disguise, or, rather, in your own character, as a woman, only wearing a blonde wig, you returned to the fort as Miss Meserole, and led Miss Kennerley into a trap.

"We rescued her several days ago, and you escaped, and were allowed by Captain Forrester to go your way, only he sent a squad of soldiers to follow you, that no harm should befall you."

"He was very kind," sneered the woman.

"Kinder than you deserved; but Captain Brimstone and

his band were captured; the former was killed, and Miss Kennerly was rescued.

"I had captured Snow Face, the renegade, and had him shot. I promised to give to his wife a letter, and I am just returning from that mission, while the others went on to the fort, and, finding you here, I see that you have in some way thrown the squad trailing you off the scent.

"Now, let me tell you that you mistook me for your brother, as I am dressed in the very uniform he wore. You did not expect to find me here, while you knew me at the fort in a different character, and saw me at the canyon, before you fled, in my real person as a scout."

"And my brother?"

"Is dead, in reality."

"Are you the man who killed my brother?"

"As you force me to tell you, yes."

"Buffalo Bill, some day I will kill you—will avenge my brother, mark my words!" and the disguised woman shook her clenched fist in the scout's face.

"A threatened man lives long, and I grow fat on threats," was the scout's indifferent reply, and then he added:

"Come! This is no place for you, and I will guide you to the nearest point for you to take the Overland coach East.

"If you remain here, you will be killed by redskins.

"When you reach the station, which we can do by sunrise, I will return your belt of arms; but now you must go," and Buffalo Bill stepped forward, picked up the belt of arms, saddled the horses, and led the way from the camp, the strange woman making no remonstrance, and obeying in perfect silence."

Not a word did she utter, through the night's long ride, nor until after the sun was an hour high did the scout halt.

Then he spoke:

"Do you see yonder cabin?"

"Yes."

"It is two miles from here, and on the Overland.

"The agent bears the name of Tenderfoot Tom, and the eastbound coach will go by at noon.

"Good-by, and take my advice and keep away from the West."

"I thank you for your care of me in bringing me here; but I am revengeful, Buffalo Bill, so shall keep my word," and, calling to her pack-horse to follow, the woman rode on her way toward the cabin on the Overland, leaving the scout to go his way alone.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FORCED ALLY.

Tenderfoot Tom had the confidence of the managers of the Overland line.

He was faithful to his duties—they had always found him so, at least—and he was brave as a lion.

Tom was seated in front of his cabin, as was his habit, gazing out over the scenery before him, when he saw a horseman ride out of the timber, followed by a pack horse.

"He are in uniform, and do look like a youngster," muttered Tom, as the coming horseman neared the cabin, ap-

proaching slowly up the hill, his pack horse trotting along behind him.

"Hello, Pard Buttons! Which way, and whar goin'?"

"From Fort Fairview, a bugler of the —th Regiment, on leave and bound East. Wish to know more?"

"I is allers a bit cur'us; but dismount and stake out ther critturs, fer ther stage goes by at noon."

"I will go by it; but I wish to sell my cattle to you."

"We wants critters allers, and yours seems ter be fust-class; but I hain't no money."

"Give me an order on your boss at the other end of the line, and make it for just five hundred."

"Won't give it, for ther critturs hain't wuth more than four."

"I'll hand you fifty now for yourself, and throw in the saddle, pack-saddle, and bridles."

"Now, pard, you is talkin' sense, so I'll make it six hundred, call it three horses in ther order, and you give me a cool hundred now fer my generosity."

"All right, Tenderfoot Tom."

"What might be your name?"

"Roberts."

"I see; but I thought as how you might be a youngster I has heerd of over at Fairview, as they calls Billie Blew, ther Boy Bugler."

"Yes, I know him well, of course."

"They do say as how he can play that fine as to make birds quit singin' when he begins; but, jist make yerself at home, while I puts up ther critturs, and then we'll write ther order fer ther money, and, after thet, hev some grub."

This arrangement was carried out, and the stage came in sight just as dinner was finished.

Tenderfoot Tom said something to Rainbow Bob, the driver, in a low tone, and the young stranger was invited to take a seat on the box with him, while his traps were hoisted to the top of the coach, which at once rolled away.

Tenderfoot felt in a good humor, for he was a clean hundred in pocket, besides some other things he had fallen heir to through the generosity of his young companion of an hour before.

So intent was he upon his meditations that he failed to notice a horseman coming up the trail toward the cabin until he was quite near to him.

Then he sprang to his feet, and seized his rifle, but at once laid it aside, with the remark:

"It's the Deserter Sergeant. It are lucky he didn't catch up with ther boy."

Then, as the horseman drew near, he called out:

"Hello, sergeant, whar from and what news?"

"Bad news, Tom," and the speaker dismounted, staked his horse out and took a seat by the tree, facing the station man.

"Waal, I hopes nothin' hev gone ag'in' ther cap'n."

"It is just what has happened."

"The deuce! Be he captered?"

"He is dead."

"Oh, Lord! when and whar?"

"Buffalo Bill led a party of Boys in Blue into the retreat at Eagle Canyon, and killed and captured the outfit."

"'Ceptin' you?"

"Yes, I got away."

"You was playin' in great luck; but did ther cap'n die

suddint, or did he git religion, and in his last minutes give his pards away?"

"Captain Brimstone did not give you away, Tom; but how many more of the band of Brimstone Brotherhood are there besides you and me?"

"Thar is four or five more, I guesses, scattered about the mines; but you is ther only one knows I are a secret member, sergeant."

"Yes, now that the captain and several others in Eagle Canyon have passed in their chips, I am the only one that holds your secret, Tom. I followed a trail of two horses here; who war the riders?"

"A young horn-blower from the fort on leave, and going home, but he were a fool to come this far alone."

"He took the stage?"

"Yes."

"Now, Tenderfoot Tom, as you said, I alone know that you were secretly an ally of the Brimstone Brotherhood, and the compact between us is to be that you are my ally."

"I'm agreed, sergeant."

"Yes, you are to keep your place here, and report to me every movement of an outlaw and horsethief, and you are to send your letters to me in a cipher I will give you, addressed to the fort."

"To the fort?"

"Yes, for I will be there, or near there. I am to know every suspicious character that goes through in the coach, and if you fail me, Tom, I will know it, for I shall entrap you if I can."

"I say, pard, I——"

"Now, Tom, I am not, as you suppose, the deserter sergeant, but one who will spare you and protect you if you serve me, as I wish, and send you to the end of a rope if you fail me."

"My dear Tom, I am Buffalo Bill! Hold! those weapons I exchanged with you are not loaded, but yours are!"

"Don't make me kill you with your own revolver, Tom."

"Durned ef I do, Buf'ler Bill; but I are ther deapest beatedest man you ever seen, and I caves complete."

"You are wise; but, you understand me, and your position, so we will talk business," and the scout smiled, for he was master of the situation.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LADY SPORT.

The situation on the Overland Trail, as detailed in Chapter V., when Rainbow Rob's coach was brought to a hold-up by masked road-agents, and in the minute of their success a woman suddenly sprang from the stage and "chipped in with her sixes" was a most thrilling one.

Rainbow Rob was a man to take quick advantage of anything that turned up in his favor.

The fact that no fire came from others in ambush, and no other outlaws appeared, revealed to him at a glance that there were no more than the three.

The leader of these was under cover of the girl's revolver, and the other two at the heads of the horses seemed struck spellbound.

"I've got him covered, Rainbow Rob, so drive on with your hearse and leave him to me," cried the girl.

Rainbow Rob half obeyed, for he suddenly raised his hand, a report followed, while the man at the head of the leader, on the side of which stood the outlaw under cover of the girl's pistol, dropped in his tracks, and at the same time, the horses, startled by the shot, were swung round directly over the fellow on the other side.

He tried to escape, but was knocked down and hurt severely, while the brake was put on and Rainbow Rob leaped to the ground just as the girl swung out.

"Hands up, outlaw, or die?"

The man obeyed with promptness, for he saw that his situation was desperate, and knew that the trapper was trapped.

At the same time the others in the coach leaped out, and Rainbow Rob said dryly:

"No need o' yer services now, pards, fer ther stiff is provided fer ther buryin' by this leddy."

"As fer you, pard, I'd like a look at yer face, and so will clip yer claws and then take a peep at yer countenance, which are a mean one, I'll bet high on it."

"May be it were better thet ther leddy send yer ter kingdom come, fer yer'll hang, sart'in, when yer reaches Gold Pocket City."

As Rob spoke he stepped up to the side of the outlaw, who stood with his hands elevated above his head, and at once disarmed him, after which he tore the mask from his face.

"As I thoughted, you is one o' ther Gold Grabbers Gang; but I guess you is about all is left of 'em."

"Pards, give a hand yender in puttin' thet gerloot on ther hearse, along with ther stiff I kilt, fer it are my rule ter take all game home arter killin' it."

Thus appealed to, those from the coach raised the wounded outlaw, who had been knocked down by the leaders, and placed him in the stage, while the dead man was thrown on top.

"Pard, you get up thar, too," ordered Bob, to the outlaw leader, who stood silently in their midst.

He was a young man, reckless-faced, but really handsome.

His form was slight, but elegant. His dress was strangely neat for one whose life was spent on the road, and his hands and feet were small and shapely.

He wore his hair long, and it was dark brown and waving, while his face was covered with a dark beard some six inches in length.

He gazed with a strange interest upon the girl who had captured him, and seemed dazed rather than alarmed.

In obedience to the order of Rainbow Rob, he mounted the box, but was told to take a seat back on the coach, for the driver remarked:

"Keep an eye on yer dead pard, as a warnin' of what yer own fate will be."

The young outlaw smiled, and it lit up his face with an expression that was almost womanly in its softness. This the woman sport seemed to notice, for she gazed at him with interest.

"I will ride on the box with you, if I may," she said, quietly.

"Now I'll be just as tickled as though I'd run a tack in my heel to have you, miss. I wants your better acquaintance, for you is a dandy in petticoats, and no mistake."

"You called me by name a while since, so what might be your name?" asked the driver.

"Oh, I heard you called Rainbow Rob back at the station, and had heard of you before as the best driver on the Overland.

"My name is—well, call me Bessie, and I am a lady sport," answered the girl, with a smile that fairly stunned Rob.

"Waal, Miss Bessie, I am proud ter meet yer, and yer'll be conferrin' a favor ter ride with me on ther box," declared the driver, who then bade the passengers re-enter the coach.

Then, with the dead man on top, the prisoner seated near him, and Bessie on the box by his side, Rob drove on his way.

Rainbow loved a pretty woman as much as he did a fine horse, and that was saying a great deal for him, so he tried to ingratiate himself into the favor of his fair companion with as much expedition as possible.

What so lovely a young woman was doing in the West alone he could not understand, but he meant that she should find in him a protector; so, as they rode along, he made himself so agreeable that he quite forgot his prisoner's existence, or that there was a man slain by his hand within a few feet of him.

But the prisoner called himself to mind in a way that fairly startled even Rainbow Rob.

CHAPTER X.

A LEAP FOR LIFE.

The outlaw prisoner, whom Rainbow Rob had recognized as a man known in the mines as one of a band of gold grabbers, had quietly remained upon the top of the coach, regarding his fair captor with a strange look on his face, and listening to the conversation between her and the driver.

He had not been bound, as there was no rope at hand to tie him with, and then, Rainbow Rob had "clipped his claws," as he called disarming him, and therefore did not expect him to be dangerous.

"This is the most dangerous part o' ther road, miss, and a leetle bad drivin' right here would send us all in ther old hearse down to death," said Rainbow, as the coach suddenly turned around a cliff where a narrow shelf of rock formed the coach trail.

It wound around the cliff for a hundred yards, with a precipice on one side looking down into a foaming river sixty feet below.

If Rob had expected the young woman to be appalled at the danger, he was mistaken, for she looked calmly down from her lofty perch and said, coolly:

"There is hardly more than two feet between the wheel tracks and the precipice, so that a sudden swerve of the horses would throw us over."

"Yer is a cool one, miss, and—Oh, Lordy!"

The exclamation of Rob was at beholding the outlaw prisoner suddenly spring far out from the top of the stage-coach to descend into the foaming river below!

Instantly the driver threw his revolver forward to fire upon the descending form of the outlaw when it was struck up by the girl.

"For shame!" she cried; "let him escape, if he be not dashed to death, for his bold act deserves it."

"Yer is right, miss; he desaves to git away," said Rainbow Rob, whose revolver had gone off from the shock of the girl's blow, sending the bullet into the air.

For an instant of time the form of the outlaw seemed to hang poised in the air; then it shot downward, stiff, upright and like a flash, for the foaming river, sixty feet below.

There were rocks here and there in the stream, against which the waters surged furiously, and had the outlaw not calculated his place to strike, he would stand a good chance of being dashed to death when he struck.

Then, too, there might be a sunken rock which the waters concealed, upon which he might fall.

Again; did he strike a clear space, would he not sink so deep as to lose his strength ere he rose? To swim in that mad torrent would take a strong, bold swimmer, and one of great endurance as well.

The banks of the river were rocky and steep, and it would be some distance before he could find a landing place.

These slim chances for escape flashed through the minds of both the woman sport and Rainbow Rob, as their eyes were riveted upon the descending form.

They saw the outlaw strike the waters, disappear beneath the flood, and it seemed like an age that they watched and waited for his reappearance.

At last, a hundred feet below, he rose and struck out boldly to guide himself down the swift-flowing flood, and a yell of admiration broke from the lips of Rainbow Rob at the thrilling sight.

"He'll git away, miss," he said.

"He swims superbly, and he deserves to escape," was the reply, and as the girl spoke, suddenly out of the coach window came the flash and report of revolvers.

In an instant the girl sport took in the situation; the men inside the coach were firing at the escaping man.

With a quickness that surprised Rob and won his admiration, the young woman swung herself down upon the box-step and thrust her revolver into the coach window, while she cried:

"Cowards! Dare fire another shot at that man, outlaw though he be, and I will send a bullet into your hearts!"

The men in the coach shrank back at her bold act and threatening words, while Rob called out:

"Bully for you, little leddy, and I backs yer up if yer does kill 'em, fer it are a coward act."

Rainbow Rob had seemed to forget his having fired upon the outlaw a moment before.

The girl swung herself back to her seat on the box, and as the coach rolled off of the dangerous rock shelf to a place of safety, the brave swimmer was seen to reach a break in the bank where he could land, and in an instant he had drawn himself up out of danger.

Turning, he took off his dripping sombrero, waved it, and his clear voice rang out like a bugle:

"I owe you my life, miss, and I will not forget it!"

CHAPTER XI.

BOYS IN BUCKSKIN.

The return of the Boys in Blue to Fort Fairview, with Miss Kennerly rescued, created a sensation, which was only increased when the whole story was known of the rescue, and what Buffalo Bill had accomplished.

Buffalo Bill had been given a special detail of soldiers, which he had formed of picked men, and had secretly sent out of the fort.

He had wisely decided that when he wished a force it was too far to get them from the fort, and so had camped his men in a canyon, which he knew would be a safe retreat at all times.

Here they had waited while he was playing the deserter sergeant in the band of Captain Brimstone, spreading his net to entrap the outlaws, and also to insnare the cunning and cruel renegade chief, Snow Face.

While he was gone to the village of Snow Face, Captain Brimstone, as Parson Black, with the exiled boy bugler, went to the fort to kidnap Kate Kennerley, and secure thereby a large ransom.

Fortunately, Captain Fred Forrester had at once taken the trail of the kidnappers, come upon Buffalo Bill returning from the Sioux village, and comparing notes, the Boys in Blue were at once ordered out of their secret camp, and just in time to ambush Snow Face and a band of warriors who were pursuing the scout.

The attack of Captain Brimstone's band followed quickly on the destruction of Snow Face's Indians, and the rescue of Kate Kennerley and escape of Miss Meserole was the end of the trail.

Such was the story which was told at the fort, when Captain Forrester, Surgeon Powell and the gallant secret service detachment of Boys in Blue returned.

But there was much anxiety felt for the scout, who had not returned with his men.

They knew that he had gone to fulfill his pledge to Snow Face, to carry the letter written by the renegade chief to his wife.

As the days went by and Buffalo Bill did not return, Captain Forrester went to Colonel Cassidy, the commandant, and asked to go on a scout with a couple of companies after him.

The permission was given, and the troopers were preparing for the march, when Buffalo Bill rode quietly into the fort.

The appearance of horse and rider indicated that they had had a long and hard ride of it, and the men greeted the popular trailer with cheer after cheer.

He at once sought the quarters of the commandant, who gave him a warm welcome and chided him for the desperate chances he had taken.

"I went, Colonel Cassidy, to keep my pledge, and also to test the humor of the woman who will now rule the Sioux in the place of her dead husband, the renegade.

"You know that I have met her twice before. She is a very remarkable person, and I made this discovery—that she will be more cruel, more merciless even, than was the chief.

"She knows herself to be an outcast, and her idol was her husband, and he is dead, so she vows vengeance and will have it if in her power.

"Then there are two other things to take into consid-

eration—the first being that strange creature, known here as the Boy Bugler, and Miss Meserole.

"I came upon her in camp, and saw her take the coach east from a station; but I believe she means more mischief, and I would not be surprised to see her back on the border at any time.

"The next cause for anxiety is the outlaws, for I learned from a station agent, Tenderfoot Tom, who has reason to know about these matters, that other road agents will be on the trails now, and you are aware that all of the Brimstone Brotherhood are not yet wiped out.

"Under these circumstances I am going to ask your permission to detail half a dozen scouts for fort service, and let me pick others among my trailers for a special band of Buckskin Boys, to aid me in the good work of running to earth these outlaws, and also to discover just what this renegade Sioux queen intends to do.

"I will make my headquarters in some secret retreat away from the fort, and report fully to you, and both Captain Forrester and Surgeon Frank Powell shall know my retreat in case you wish to communicate with me at any time; and I need not tell you that there are no better scouts under my command than these two officers."

Just one week after his return he rode out of the fort, one night, and both Captain Forrester and Surgeon Powell went along in order to discover just where the retreat of the Buckskin Boys would be.

CHAPTER XII.

GOLD POCKET CITY.

The mining camp of "Gold Pocket City" was a very straggling affair, located in a valley, through which a shallow, swift-flowing stream wound its way, and with hamlets scattered about for a distance of half a dozen miles.

The Miners' Roost Hotel was the place of Gold Pocket, and with its annex, known as the "Spirit Palace," and a gambling hell called "Poker Hall," formed the most popular resort in the mines.

The Roost, with its annex saloon and gambling hall, had come under the proprietorship of a new landlord, the former, with a great deal of wisdom, having sold out and gone East before he would find it impossible to do so.

The new landlord was, in Gold Pocket parlance, "a but-tercup," whatever that might mean when applied to a man.

He was a stranger in town, and had the look of a preacher, dressed in black. He was never without an immaculate white shirt and tie, wore gold-rimmed spectacles, and carried outside of his tightly-buttoned frock coat a belt containing a trio of revolvers.

Where he had come from no one knew, but he had arrived on the coach one morning, killed a man who called himself a sky pirate before breakfast, bought the former landlord of the Roost out before dinner, paying cash for his bargain, and no mean man at that, and before supper had the following announcement posted upon the doors of the hotel, the saloon and gambling hall:

"TAKE GOOD NOTICE

that I have bought out this hash factory, with all appurtenances, and intend to run it according to my own views of how a hotel, saloon and gambling den should be run.

"If any one offers me advice unasked, let him do it with his pistol ready for work, for I shall stand no meddling, nor will I allow my premises to be turned into a bear-garden.

"Yours truly,

BONIFACE BILL."

Then a rumor went around that Boniface Bill was preparing for other lodgers, for some one had discovered him in Gold Pocket burying-ground—which rejoiced in the name of "Welcome House Cemetery"—laying out a private lot for his own dead, seemingly.

He had already buried one man he had shot there, giving him the post of honor as Number One.

It was some two months after his coming that Rainbow Rob drove up to the door of the Roost, with the lady sport seated on the box by his side, a dead body on the top of his coach, and a much-worried outlaw in the vehicle with the passengers.

Rainbow Rob threw his reins upon the backs of his wheelers, which the stable boys already had in hand, and, dismounting, turned to aid his fair companion to alight, when, with a graceful spring, she leaped over his head and ran up the steps to the hotel.

A yell of admiration greeted her act, and the landlord, ignoring the male passengers, hastened to the office to greet her, followed by the driver.

"Who is she, Rob?" asked Landlord Boniface Bill, with interest.

"I pass, more than to say she are a daisy, and calls herself a lady sport.

"I'll interdooce yer, pard."

And, leading the landlord up to the fair passenger, who stood by the office desk, Rob said:

"Mis Bessie, this are Landlord Boniface Bill, o' ther Roost, and he are a square man from toe ter topknot.

"Bony, this are Miss Bessie, ther lady sport, and she jist are a terror in petticoats, as yer'll know when I tells yer what she have did."

"I am glad to meet you, Landlord Boniface, and I am here to stay, so I wish your best room, and you'll find my baggage in the coach. Shall I register?"

For once, Boniface Bill seemed to be taken aback.

The beautiful eyes of the woman were upon him; his face flushed, and, in an embarrassed way, he turned the hotel register around for her to write therein her name.

In a bold hand, she wrote:

"BOWIE-KNIFE BESSIE,

"The Lady Sport."

Then Rainbow Rob went off with the landlord to tell his story, and from that minute the lady sport became a beautiful mystery in Gold Pocket City, and the idol of the miners.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON A WOMAN'S TRAIL.

Dripping, panting, and barely able to clamber up the steep, rocky bank, after his desperate struggle with the foaming waters for life, the outlaw who had dared make such a bold effort to escape, dropped down to rest, while the coach rolled on, leaving him a free man.

For a long while he lay there to rest, and his thoughts were busy.

"Who is she? What is she?" he mused. "She euchred me in the moment of success, for I had the very men whom I sought in that coach.

"I must try again.

"But I must know that woman, and all about her. Dick is dead, and Carl is hurt, and in the hands of the Philistines, so I am alone, except for Chinees at the camp.

"I must give up the road, at least for a while, and go to the camps.

"I think I can disguise myself so as not to be known.

"Now to go to my camp."

He arose, and walked along the bank for a mile or more.

Then he came to where he could cross the river, and, springing in, swam to the other shore.

Taking a course that led him into the Overland stage trail, after a walk of a couple of miles, he followed it back to the scene of the tragedy, and which had so nearly been fatal to him.

He stood a moment upon the spot, as though recalling all that had passed there, and, as he turned to go, his eyes fell upon what caused him to start, utter an exclamation of surprise, and spring toward an object lying in the trail.

It was a leather wallet, encircled by a rubber strap, and apparently well filled.

Eagerly, he opened it, and beheld papers therein and a large sum in bank notes, all of large denomination.

"Great Scott! I have struck a fortune, after all! Now, I am myself again, and I take that woman's trail."

Several hundred yards away he came upon three horses hitched in a thicket, and saddled and bridled, ready for the road.

They were just as the trio of outlaws had left them when they went to hold up Ribbon Rob's coach.

"You two go back riderless, for your master is dead, and yours goes on to Gold Pocket to hang.

"And you, too, very nearly went riderless, old horse," he said, addressing the three animals.

Unfastening the stake-rope of the two, he mounted his own horse, and led the others back through the timber.

He rode slowly, and, as though in deep thought, and at last came in sight of a small canyon, in which was a camp, that was evidently only temporary.

Several horses were staked out near, and near a camp-fire knelt a form, cutting up a deer.

The man ran, as he heard hoof-falls, displaying the form of a giant Chinees, for he was all of six feet four inches in height, broad-shouldered, and of athletic build.

He was dressed in buckskin, even to his moccasins, and wore a slouch hat on his head, the rim of which had painted upon it a number of Chinese letters.

If he was armed, save a rifle that stood near, the weapons were not visible about his person.

"Bosee backee allee lightee," he said, with a smile, as the outlaw rode up and threw himself from his horse.

"Yes, Chinees, boss is back, all right; but he has had the closest shave of his life, and Carl is a prisoner, and Dick is dead."

"The devee! Habee muchee hard time?"

"Yes, very!"

"Dickee dead?"

"Carlee hangee?"

"Not yet, but he soon will be."

"Bossee allee lightee?"

"Yes."

"Chinee allee lightee?"

"Yes."

"Keepee allee lightee, you bettee!"

"I hope so, Chinee; but we'll have supper, and then light out for our Overland station, where we can sell the horses, and then take the coach for Gold Pocket."

"To see Carlee hang up?"

"No; for I guess they won't delay that little attention to him; but you will go with me, Chinee?"

"To degee, if bossee wantee," was the prompt and decided rejoinder.

"No, I don't wish to go to the devil; but we'll stick together as pards, and we'll make money, too, Chinee."

"You bettee! Bossee no foollee, and Chinaman habee muchee heap sense, you bettee!" and the Chinaman proceeded to prepare supper, while the outlaw, whom he had addressed as boss, and seemed so anxious to cling to as a pard, went to a pack-saddle to get some dry clothing.

The next morning, armed and equipped once more, and with half a dozen led horses, one of them bearing a pack, the outlaw and Chinee set out for a station on the Overland.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RED TRAILER.

A number of men were encamped in a thick growth of timber that fringed the top of a ridge jutting out from a range of mountains into a plain.

Here and there the trail was broken by a stream, a timber motte, or a rise of land; but the view across was a fine one, and extended for miles.

The men encamped there were evidently there to stay, for they had built wickiups, which afforded them good shelter in case of rain, and in a ravine near wood was piled up for campfires, while scattered about, as though lately in use, were cooking utensils, buckets of water, and several pack-baskets of salt, pepper, coffee, and sugar.

Further down, the ravine spread out in a valley, and here were horses staked out, a score in number, with their saddles and bridles placed by each lariat-pin, ready for instant use.

And down this valley was the only means of getting away from the camp on the summit of the ridge.

To one riding along at the base of the ridge, there would be no suspicion of a camp on the ridge, or near, and the trail down the valley led directly into a lake, which stretched from hill to hill.

On the other side there were numerous trails of buffalo, wolves, bear and horses that made the mountain lake a drinking place, and it would have been a clever trailer to suspect that a trail of horsemen led across the lake and up to the ridge.

Coming up the trail to the lake were two horsemen, who boldly rode into the water, and their horses waded toward a wood-covered island not a hundred feet away. There the two riders dismounted, and took from among the bushes a canvas boat, which could be folded up when not in use. There were two paddles in it.

The horsemen lifted the saddles and bridles, and put them in the boat; then they got in themselves, and, while

one paddled, the other led the horses on either side of the little craft.

The water deepened rapidly, and soon the horses were swimming, the boat keeping its lead.

It was a long swim, but the good steeds were equal to it, and a landing was made upon the upper shore of the mountain basin. One of the men then resaddled the animals, while the other, taking another boat of like kind from among the bushes, towed it back to the island, and left it there.

Had he suspected a trailer on their path, he would have taken notice of what he took to be a piece of bark floating upon the waters; and, had he paddled toward it, he would have discovered the face of an Indian!

This redskin had, in truth, been following the two horsemen, and was boldly swimming across the lake, but, seeing the boat returning, he took to floating, to avoid detection.

The man in the boat paddled back to the island, rehid the little craft he had in tow, and, without observing the face of the floating Indian, returned to the upped end of the basin.

The Indian waited until the rower was far away on the waters, and then boldly swam after him.

He reached the spot where the boat landed, and soon slipped away in the fringe of trees on one side of the valley.

An hour after, he again appeared, entered the lake, swam to the lower shore, and darted off down the foothills like a deer.

It was very evident that he had made what he deemed to be an important discovery.

In the meantime, the man with the two horses had gone up the valley until it narrowed into a canyon, and ended in the rocky ravine at the summit of the ridge.

A dozen men were in the camp, and all greeted him pleasantly, as he appeared, as though he had been absent several days.

"Chief here, Bird?" he asked of one.

"Yes, up at his wickiup. Any news, Jack?"

"Some little," was the reply, and he passed on.

The man was dressed in buckskin, as were the others in the camp, and as also had been his companion who returned with the boat.

The horses, all splendid animals, were staked in the valley below. Their saddles and bridles were of the finest Mexican make, and bespangled with silver coin.

A magnificent lot of men they were, too, with long hair, bearded faces, bronzed complexions, and the forms of athletes, every one of them.

The one who now sought the chief was something of a dandy in dress, for his buckskin leggins and hunting shirt were beaded and fringed; he wore a gray silk shirt, while his sombrero was looped up over the left ear with a gold star of five points, and a chain of gold links encircled it.

His form was slightly over the medium height, and a model of symmetry, while his build was muscular in the extreme.

A slight mustache shaded his mouth, yet did not hide even rows of snow-white teeth, which were well displayed when he smiled, and his smile was most winning.

He wore a belt of arms, had a rifle swung at his back, and his leggins were tucked into the tops of cavalry boots.

The man was a handsome specimen of the true plainsman, a hero in buckskin, and one who won fame as Texas Jack, but who, when born in a Virginia village, was given the name of John B. Omohundro.

"Hello, Jack! Back again?" said a man, rising from a *serape*, where he had been lying at full length, and he added:

"I began to feel anxious about you, pard."

"I am back, Bill, and I have news to tell," was the reply, and the two, Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack, sat down for a council of war, for the Texan trailer had brought very important tidings to the chief of the Buckskin Braves.

CHAPTER XV.

BOWIE-KNIFE BESSIE.

The arrival of the beautiful stranger at Gold Pocket created a sensation in the mines, and especially as it became known that she had written herself down as "Lady Sport."

Most of the females who had come to Gold Pocket had arrived under protection of its citizens.

Some were deserted wives in search of their truant husbands; others were daughters in search of a father, or sister looking up a lost brother, with now and then a sweet-heart making bold to trace up a fickle lover.

Most of the wives who had caught or found husbands remained; some of the daughters would give up the chase and take a husband instead of a father, and the sweet-heart would be certain to be consoled for her lover by some handsome, young miner in Gold Pocket City.

Thus it had come to pass, in the second year of the existence of Gold Pocket, a score or more of females had become dwellers there.

That one had arrived, however, who did not come in search of some "horrid man," but had come as a sport, created an excitement in the Pocket which the death of half a dozen of its best citizens "with their boots on" would not have occasioned.

Gold Pocket was joggling along in the even, or uneven, tenor, as the case might be, of its way, with Boniface Bill a most popular landlord, and becoming more so every day.

The gold leads were panning out satisfactorily, if not most generously; money was plenty, business good, and gambling the order of the night.

The Roost was better kept than ever before. Poker Hall had been enlarged and fitted up, the Spirit Palace had departed from the old-time custom of selling "whisky straight" only, and now dispensed "mixed drinks," while the liquors were considered above par in quality; but, if not so in reality, Landlord Bony wisely kept the secret to himself, and, if he had occasion to discharge any of his bartenders, he was morally certain he would not tell on him, as he would see that he left town by way of Welcome Home Cemetery, and, I may add just here, that the landlord had added to his list of victims two gentlemen who, as the unanimous verdict was, had met a just fate for not knowing that the host of the Roost was always "loaded."

Bony, however, buried them at his own expense, and the inscriptions to their memory were as thoroughly to the

point as the one on the headboard over the grave of Donkey Dan.

When the news spread that a lady sport had arrived in the Pocket, the boys were excited, as I have said, and the more so when it became noised about that she could not be over eighteen years of age, was beautiful in face and form, dressed gorgeously in Mexican costume, wore diamonds to dazzle the eyes, and went armed to the teeth.

Landlord Bony gave the fair guest a cottage to herself, perched upon a spur above the hotel proper, and which had been fitted up and occupied by Gambler Gaul, a man who had held high carnival in Gold Pocket as a card-player, but, disappearing suddenly, had turned out to be none other than Captain Brimstone, the road-agent.

The lady sport expressed herself delighted with her quarters, and unpacked her traps with the air of one who had come to stay.

What she brought with her made her rooms, for she had two in her cabin, look most homelike, and when she appeared in the supper-room the miners just held their breath.

Beautiful she certainly did look, while her costume was exquisite.

And yet it was marred by her belt of arms.

It was a belt, yet encircled by sash of gold thread, and the trimmings of her Mexican costume were of gold embroidery, lace and bell buttons, the last giving a musical jingle at every movement of her body.

She wore her sombrero, with its fringe of gold coins and cord of gold, while a pin held up the loop, representing a bowie-knife, with gold blade, the hilt studded with rubies.

In her belt were a pair of gold-mounted revolvers, one on each hip, while on either side were a pair of bowie-knives, bright-bladed and sharp.

After supper, Landlord Bony led his guest into Poker Hall, just as a row, unfortunately, began, for a huge bully, a desperado feared by all, had decided upon a victim in his drunken fury, and that victim was a mere boy, who cowered, trembling, before him.

"You is a durned fool ter come ter these parts, so I is goin' ter send yer out o' 'em durned quick!" roared the desperado, just as the lady sport entered the room.

With his words, he threw his revolver forward to fire, when, quick as a flash, the lady sport, slipping a bowie-knife from her belt, hurled it with such true aim that it stuck, quivering, in the arm of the desperado!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BUCKSKIN BRAVES AT HOME.

As the reader has doubtless surmised, the camp on the ridge, which the scout, Texas Jack, and his comrade entered by crossing the lake, was that of the Buckskin Braves, the special detail of frontiersmen under the command of Buffalo Bill.

In the time that they had been away from the fort, much had been done as the foundation for future work, though on the surface nothing had yet made display.

The chief of scouts had made a circuit of the country he had to operate in, and had acquainted his men with the location of the Sioux village and the separate trails leading thereto.

He had under him picked men, scouts who were equal

to the redskins as trailers, and who were also able to "out-Injun" them in cunning.

For pluck, Buffalo Bill would put his Braves in Buckskin against the world, while they were, all of them, superb horsemen, dead shots, and possessed endurance to stand every hardship and fatigue.

He had been working also to find the hiding places of horse thieves who infested the border, and discover if the rumor was true that the Gold Grabbers of the Rocky Mountains, driven from their scenes of outlawry, were determined to make the vicinity of Fort Fairview their base of operations, notwithstanding the summary fate of the Brimstone Brotherhood.

Knowing that there were yet half a dozen or more of this same brotherhood at large, Buffalo Bill did not doubt but that they would be glad to unite themselves with any new band of outlaws who might come that way, not only from feelings of revenge against himself and the soldiers, but also for the sake of plunder.

With well-to-do settlers scattered here and there, a few thinly-garrisoned forts, the mines panning out well, and trains and coaches running regularly east and west, there were chances for the road-agents to make rich hauls.

So, as he had done with the Boys in Blue, the chief of scouts wished to have his Buckskin Braves on the field, where he could get at them when needed, and where their presence would be unsuspected.

Acquainted most thoroughly with the country, Buffalo Bill knew scores of hiding places, which he was ever on the watch for, and, with a glass one day, from the distant range of mountains, had discovered the canyon above the lake, and sought it out for his own convenience.

And thither he had taken his Braves in Buckskin, for well he knew any tracks he might leave would soon be obliterated by buffalo, deer, and elk coming there to drink.

He had prepared for crossing the lake by bringing from the fort two canvas boats, that closed up like an accordion, and could be carried on a pack-saddle, with braces to stretch it out when needed for use.

And thus far his retreat was known to but two persons outside of the command of fourteen scouts he had with him.

Those two were Surgeon Frank Powell and Captain Fred Forrester, who had accompanied the scout to their retreat.

Both of these officers were noted as scouts, and they were trusted as such on a trail as thoroughly as was any man in buckskin on the border.

Going with the chief of scouts and his men, they knew just how to reach the secret camp, and Buffalo Bill told them that one boat was always kept hidden in the thicket on the little island and another at the camp end of the lake.

The island was hardly half an acre in size, and with deep water all around, yet had a bar running out to it from the shore, on which the depth was not over three feet, so that a horseman could ride thus far and keep dry.

The bar was narrow, and the animals seeking water there were never tempted to visit the island, while a pale-face or redskin saw no motive for doing so, as he expected, of course, to have to swim there.

Beyond the island from where the canvas boat lay the lake was many feet deep.

In breadth, it was from half a mile to a quarter, with steep valley sides for banks, and thus could not be flanked, as towering cliffs arose on either side.

In length, the lake was nearly two miles, and winding, narrowing to a pass at the upper end, where the fertile valley began.

This valley was rich in grass, and would herd hundreds of cattle, so that the horses of the scouts found ample food there.

Beyond was the rugged canyon, ending in the ravine, with the timber-clad plateau on top of the ridge above.

Here were the brush shelters of the scouts, with the one thrown up for the chief slightly apart.

It was well made, and dry, even in a rainstorm.

A shelter of brush was over the front, to keep off rain and sunshine, and here the chief had a mossy bank on which to throw his *serape* for rest on the long afternoons.

By moving his position a few feet, he could see out over the foothills and plains for miles, and he had so placed boughs of trees that those on the ridge could not be seen from the lowlands, nor their presence there suspected.

It was natural, then, for all to feel no dread of their retreat being discovered, and Texas Jack, who had been sent off on a special scout toward the Sioux village, with one companion, had no idea that he had been tracked by a cunning redskin chief, tracked to the shore of the lake, and then even trailed across the water, up the valley, and almost to the very camp of the Braves in Buckskin.

In truth, the redskin scout had gotten to a position where he could see the scout's camp, and, counting the horses in the valley, he had come to the conclusion that there were a score of men in the encampment; but he had counted the pack-animals as well, so got five more than there really were.

And back he went, with his story, while Texas Jack had his story to tell of a discovery he had made, and both the scout's and the redskin chief's stories were of much importance, as the reader will discover.

Between the chief of scouts and his men there always existed a friendship, as well as the position between an officer and those under him.

Buffalo Bill put on no airs; he was not spoiled by the fame he had won, nor by praise.

He knew well his power, his capabilities, and he gauged his men accordingly.

Texas Jack was his most intimate companion among the scouts, as was Surgeon Frank Powell among the officers; but he had unbounded regard for, and faith in, Captain Fred Forrester, and had ever believed him true as steel and a man to tie to in time of need.

He owed his life to Texas Jack a dozen times over, as the Texan did to him, and hence the two were like brothers.

"Eat something, Jack, for you look used up, and take your time in telling your story," he said, kindly, when the Texan told him he had important news for him, and the tried and hungry man obeyed, knowing that his chief had the patience of an Indian.

CHAPTER XVII.

A STRANGE DUEL.

In a heavy piece of timber, with a ridge in the background, a river in front, was a picturesque encampment.

There were full two hundred warriors, and their ponies were staked out around the base of the ridge, where the grass grew luxuriantly, and their trappings lay by their stake-pins.

The horses were of the class known as Indian ponies, and they were a fine lot of wiry, fleet-footed animals that showed good care from their riders, and no signs of having been on the trail for several days.

The riders were in their full rig and warpaint, and a splendid lot of muscular, young braves, some of whom appeared to be so youthful they were doubtless upon their first warpath of importance.

These were lolling lazily about under the trees, cleaning their weapons, asleep, or conversing in groups, in low tones, for no loud sound broke the stillness, and one would hardly have believed that two hundred human beings could be as quiet.

Apart from the main force was a group of four Indians, whose feather headdresses at once stamped them as chiefs.

Two of these were along in years, men who had seen half a century of life, perhaps had passed the threescore milestone.

Their faces were stern and their lips were closed, while the two younger were talking calmly together, their voices low and hardly heard twenty feet away.

Some fifty yards distant was what appeared to be a *serape* tent, in the shape of the letter A.

The sides were gayly striped, and around it was a fence of the boughs of trees lately cut.

Within this inclosure, pacing to and fro, her brow clouded, her face pale and stern, was the renegade queen, who was known now among her redskin subjects as Cruel Face.

Yet she was very beautiful, and her Indian costume was a grandly gorgeous one, with its beads and embroidery, its necklaces and amulets of beaten gold, and the head-dress of gay feathers.

The face of Irma Dean, the widow of the renegade chief, showed that she had suffered. There seemed to rest in her face a constant look of sadness, mingled with bitterness.

It was resignation, yet for a purpose.

She had feigned to be dead to all her friends, to follow a fugitive from the gallows into Western wilds.

She had idolized him, made him her hero, her religion, and he had been, by the dying confession of the man who had wronged him so cruelly, proven guiltless.

Then he had been slain, executed by order of Buffalo Bill, as a renegade, when false charges had made him so.

He had been put to death for crimes which an embittered nature had alone caused him to commit, and she had vowed to be avenged for his death.

He could not live among his own race, for they had sought to hang him, though innocent, and hence he had found a refuge among savages.

Like them, he had been cruel, and hunted down, and the man who had brought him to his death she meant to also slay.

Now, she had started upon the trail, for what was she, more than the people she ruled?

When the death of Snow Face became known, she had shown the master spirit that forced the strongest braves to acknowledge her as the ruling spirit.

She would tolerate no interference, and old Red Tomahawk, the great medicine-chief of the tribe, was her friend, and urged her claims.

So all yielded, all but one, a chief who hated a squaw as he did a paleface, and who began to foment trouble for the beautiful white renegade.

She was told of his actions, and, mounting her horse, at once rode to his tepee.

All eyes were upon her, and she called the insurgent chief to speak to her.

He came, with savage face and wicked eye.

"The Deadly Hand is my foe—is it not so?" she asked, calmly.

"The Deadly Hand hates a squaw, for they are poison in the heart of a great warrior; they make boys of braves," was the reply.

"Then the Deadly Hand refuses to obey the Cruel Face because she is a squaw, a paleface squaw?"

"She is a woman, and so a fool. She will lead the Sioux only to death. Squaws have the hearts of deers, braves have the hearts of mountain lions."

"Then let the Deadly Hand mount his horse and wait here until the Cruel Face rides to yonder tree. Then she will turn and ride toward the Deadly Hand, and kill him; so let him protect himself!"

"The Cruel Face speaks like a child; the Deadly Hand is a great chief," was the contemptuous reply.

"Then, let him show his courage, for, if he does not kill the Cruel Face, she will kill him.

"He has heard, so let him be ready!"

With this, the woman turned her horse and rode slowly away toward the tree she had pointed out, and which was three hundred yards distant from the tepee of the chief.

On either side were the tepees of the tribe, or, rather, village, over which Deadly Hand held sway, for there were half a dozen villages in the tribe under the rule of the renegade queen.

The news spread rapidly, and all was wonder and excitement, and hundreds gathered closer to see the duel.

Deadly Hand was furious, for he had had the gantlet flung in his face by a woman.

He had meant to kill her when he led his braves to rebellion, and now he was determined to do so, and sprang back into his tepee for his weapons, which consisted of a spear, bow and arrows, a cavalry carbine, and an old-fashioned revolver.

He called to a brave to bring his horse, and, when the queen had turned around the tree, he was ready to mount.

She had no rifle, only her revolvers, but he knew well that she was a dead shot.

Once faced toward the tepee of the chief, the queen rode on at a gallop, and the Indian sprang into his saddle.

Then a score of warriors rode forward, and headed off Cruel Face, begging her to let any one of them fight the savage chief in her stead.

But she waved them sternly back, and held on her way, her horse increasing his speed as he neared the tepee of Deadly Hand, who now rode toward her.

Suddenly, when about a hundred yards only divided them, the chief halted, and threw his rifle to his shoulder.

His horse stood like a statue, and a hush was upon all.

At the act, the renegade queen did not flinch, or check her speed, nor did she raise the revolver she carried in her right hand.

With the puff of smoke from the rifle, the head of her mustang was jerked upward, and the bullet, sent true, buried itself in the forehead of the animal.

Down dropped the mustang, but the agile woman, unhurt, lighted upon her feet, and ran swiftly toward the chief.

He threw aside his carbine and brought his bow and arrows into use, but was not quick enough, for, halting suddenly, up went the revolver in the renegade queen's hand, and rapidly the shots rang out.

A wild warcry, a snort of pain and fright, and Deadly Hand and his horse fell.

Advancing rapidly, the merciless woman emptied her revolver into the writhing form of the insurgent chief, and became, with his death, the indisputable ruler of the tribe.

And now we find her, with two hundred braves at her back, on the warpath, determined to keep her vow against Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT THE GRAVE OF AN IDOL.

A murmur ran through the Indian camp in the timber, and all eyes were turned toward a point where a horseman appeared.

It was a chief, and his pony seemed to have been hard ridden.

He came on toward the spot where the renegade queen had her camp, and, dismounting, advanced toward her.

"The Red Eagle is welcome, and he has something to tell me?" she said, her dark eyes fixed upon the fine face of the young chief, for he was under thirty, and a splendid specimen of savage manhood.

"The Red Eagle has news for the Cruel Face.

"She sent him to find the grave of the mighty Snow Face, and he has done so."

The woman's face flushed, with seeming pleasure, and she held out her hand and grasped that of the young chief, who seemed pleased at the act.

"The Red Eagle is a great chief, and the Cruel Face will not forget him.

"The grave of the Snow Face was hard to find?"

"Like the tracks of birds; but the Red Eagle looked close, and came upon the trail.

"There are many graves there in a pass in the hills, and there fell the braves of the Snow Face.

"Some miles away, in a canyon, is a paleface tepee, and there are other graves near, and there the Snow Face and the paleface robber band were buried."

"You have done well, Red Eagle, and when darkness comes on we will go to the grave of the Snow Face."

It was after the sun had set that the Cruel Face led her braves out of the timber, across the river, and, with Red Eagle the guide, on toward the canyon where the scene of this story opens.

The Red Eagle had shown wondrous skill in ferreting out that spot, for the massacre of the braves, with the Snow Face when he was captured, had been thorough.

They had been ambushed by the Boys in Blue, under Buffalo Bill, and they had been wiped out, while their chief had been taken prisoner to meet a different fate.

The Red Eagle had studied the situation, and had known the trail on which the ill-fated party had started, so had followed as closely as he could from what he deemed had been the course, and thus had come upon the ambush scene.

From there he had held on in the direction of the canyon, after counting the graves of the dead braves, and the skeleton remains of their ponies, and had entered the retreat of the Brimstone Brotherhood.

There he had seen the cabin, and not far from it the bones of horses, and the graves of those slain in the encounter.

He read signs well, and knew that the two graves apart must be those of soldiers, while the half dozen together were, doubtless, the robber dead, for the Boys in Blue would not bury their dead with outlaws.

Then, there was another grave, apart from the others, and was not this where lay the Snow Face?

This the Indian trailer resolved to find out.

So he dug down into the grave until he came to the blanket-enveloped form, and, though a couple of months had gone by since the body had been placed there, he knew that it was the form of the renegade chief.

So he filled in the grave, mounted his pony, and started forth for the rendezvous appointed with the renegade queen.

By night only did the renegade queen move with her warriors, for she knew that by day they would be seen afar off if any scout from the fort should happen to be in the vicinity.

The sun was rising when the Indian squadron rode into the canyon, and Red Eagle led Cruel Face at once to the grave of the man she had so dearly loved.

"There is no mistake, Red Eagle?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

"See where the Red Eagle pulled out the earth—he saw the face and form of the Snow Face.

"The Red Eagle speaks with a straight tongue."

"I know it; I feel it.

"Go with the braves up the valley.

"I will remain here to-day.

"At night come to me."

The Red Eagle departed, and soon there was not a brave in sight, for they had gone up the canyon and encamped.

The horse of the renegade queen was by the cabin, and she alone stood at the grave.

At her feet lay the body of the man she had loved, moldering into ashes, but idolized in memory.

Her stern face became livid, but the hard lines softened, and she dropped down upon the mound, with a moan that was wrung from her heart.

"Douglass, my chief, I know now that you are dead; that they murdered you.

"I needed only to see your grave to feel that you were unconscious beneath my feet, to feel what now I feel against your slayers.

"My race are guilty, and I am brutal now in my hatred toward them.

"Love made me what I am, and love will make me all

that I may become—cruel, vindictive, revengeful, my love for you, my dead idol!

"Oh, God! Am I never more to see him, to feel the touch of his hand, the pressure of his lips upon mine?"

"The thought maddens me!"

And she sprang to her feet, with savage vehemence.

The act, perhaps, saved her, for two men were just leaving a thicket near the entrance of the cavern to creep up on her, feeling that they would not be seen in her deep grief.

But her act caused them to spring back for shelter into the thicket, and yet she saw them not, so dimmed were her eyes with tears.

Placing her hand to her lips, she gave a long, shrill, peculiar call, and a moment after the sound of hoofs was heard, and an Indian horseman came down the canyon at a run.

The renegade waited until he drew rein near, and said: "I will remain here for a few days, and my braves can rest.

"Let the Red Eagle prepare for the trail, for I would know if there is any force between me and the settlement."

"The Cruel Face has spoken, and the Red Eagle goes at once on the trail," was the response, and he rode back toward the upper end of the canyon.

Soon after, the renegade, who had taken up her quarters in the cabin, saw him coming toward the pass with half a dozen braves at his back.

She supposed that he meant to take them with him on the trail; but instead the chief left them as an outpost at the pass, a guard between the renegade and danger.

The Red Eagle loved the beautiful white queen of his people.

As he reached the pass his eyes detected fresh tracks, and he followed them.

They were the tracks left by two iron-shod horses, and alone he set forth upon the trail, which ended in the camp of the Braves in Buckskin.

CHAPTER XIX.

GOLD POCKET'S IDOL.

The sudden, quick act of the lady sport struck dumb with amazement the crowd gathered in Poker Hall, and at once showed them why she had written herself down as Bowie-knife Bessie.

Her aim had been as sure as a revolver, and though she had drawn the bowie-knife and thrown it like a flash of lightning, it had buried itself in the hand of the desperado, whose revolver was leveled at a mere boy.

The truth was, the youth had struck a lead that day, just as the desperado had come upon him, and had urged him to keep it a secret.

That night when drunk the desperado had determined to pick a quarrel with the boy, kill him and alone possess the secret.

But for the action of the lady sport he would have been successful.

As the blade sank into his hand his revolver fell from his hand and exploded, the bullet shooting a miner in the leg, and a howl and a laugh followed.

As for the desperado, he turned like a mad bull upon the one who had wounded him, and dropped his left hand upon another revolver in his belt.

"Hold! hands off that weapon or I'll mark you again!"

The voice rang out like a bugle, and it was the lady sport who spoke.

But the maddened desperado did not heed, and with another quick movement the woman sent a second bowie-knife flying through the air, and the blade was buried in the forearm of the man.

He uttered a howl of rage, and still would have drawn his revolver when the words came:

"Hands up, now, or I'll send the third knife to the hilt in your head!"

There was that in the tone and look of the woman that awed the man, and he held aloft his hands, the right dripping blood, and with the knife sticking in it, the left with the blade buried to the hilt in the arm.

The lady sport stepped quickly forward, disarmed the desperado, and handing the revolver to Boniface, said:

"Keep this toy for him to play with some other time."

Then she drew out first one, then the other of her knives, wiped the blades carefully upon her handkerchief, and said:

"We'll be better friends, pard, when you give up trying to shoot boys.

"Go to the doctor and tell him to send the bill to Bowie-knife Bessie!"

The man uttered a curse and strode out of the hall, while a yell that nearly raised the roof went up when Landlord Bony cried:

"Three cheers for Bowie-knife Bessie!"

The whole scene had not occupied more than a minute, and men who would have interfered had not time to do so before the woman had mastered the situation and cowed the bully.

All eyes were upon her now, and with wonder, admiration and awe.

The young miners had all dressed up in their best, hoping to see the Mexican beauty who had come to make her home in Gold Pocket.

Now they saw her, and with a vengeance she had appeared before them.

If the first throw of the knife had been thought an accident in its aim, the second one had proven that it was simply the deadly aim of the thrower.

As serene as a May morn Bowie-knife Bessie passed on with the landlord, and after her crowded the youth she had saved from the desperado's bullet.

Then he overtook her, seized her hand and pressed it to his lips, while he said, earnestly:

"You saved my life, lady, for he meant to kill me, indeed he did.

"You see I struck it rich to-day, and he came along and found me just as I found the lead, and he told me not to tell anybody, or they would murder me, as I was only a boy.

"So I told no one, and he picked a quarrel with me to-night to kill me, so that he alone would know where my find was.

"But you saved me, and half it pans out you shall have, indeed you shall."

The boy was about seventeen, bright-faced but ugly, and he looked as though he had been in hard luck.

He neither gambled nor drank, and nothing was known against him, and Bravo Ben, the desperado, had asked

him to come to Poker Hall, and when he did he at once picked a quarrel with him.

"I am glad I served you, my boy, and I assure you you will find a friend in me," answered the lady sport, and she turned to Landlord Bony and continued:

"As I told you, I came here to gamble, so rent me a table by the month, and I guess I can find men who are willing to win a woman's money, or risk theirs against hers."

"You are right there, Miss Bessie, for men here will gamble with an angel, or the devil.

"A table is at your service, that one in the wing, with a window at your back, and it is not far across the yard to your cabin."

"It is the table I want, and I will begin work at once."

And the woman walked over to the empty table in a niche in the building, but from which she could see the entire room.

Before the hall had been enlarged it had been the bar, and just suited the ideas of the lady sport.

The table was a new one, covered with a red blanket, drawn tightly over it and tacked beneath, and taking a chair with her back to the window, the lady sport coolly glanced over the room and the many wondering and admiring faces before her.

As she did so a bat fluttered into the window and began to dart swiftly about the lamps, causing some of the miners who would not have dodged from a bullet, to duck their heads nervously.

"He is not a pet of yours, Bony?" said the woman, while an audacious smile crossed her face.

"Oh, no; I hate them."

"And I am afraid of them, so will kill him."

And quickly drawing her revolver, the report followed and the bat fell dead amid a group of miners, while the roof of the building almost rose under the yell of admiration for the woman who in less than ten minutes had established herself as Gold Pocket's Idol.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TEXAN'S REPORT.

"Now, Jack, what is your news?" and Buffalo Bill turned to Texas Jack, who, having refreshed himself with supper and a short rest, was ready to tell his story, for, as he had said, he had something important to tell.

"Well, Bill, you sent me to find out if the Sioux were on the warpath, or getting ready to go!"

"Yes, and I knew you could bring me the news if any man could, Jack."

"I did my best, and I'll tell you what we did."

"Nelse kept with you?"

"Oh, yes, and following your instructions, I readily struck the trail into the mountains where the Sioux had their village.

"But we came upon a large and fresh trail leading away from the village, so we decided that the redskins had already started on the warpath.

"To follow them might be to run upon some of the warriors who were sent back, or dropped out, and I decided that we had best follow long enough to get the direction they were taking, and then head them off.

"This we did, and we reached a point which we knew

was in advance of them, so Nelse and myself took different stands to wait for them, as I wished to count them, and then get on ahead and warn you.

"But we did not see any signs, after waiting nearly two days, so joined each other and started to head them off at another point, for we knew they must either be traveling very slow, or have changed their course.

"The next day we came upon their trail and followed it.

"It was heading toward Eagle Canyon——"

"Ah! Eagle Canyon," said Buffalo Bill, hastily.

"Yes, and I followed the trail, which was very fresh.

"We took to the ridge, and saw that they had not passed on into the canyon, and so awaited their coming.

"Soon they appeared, and at the distance we were from them I counted them as well as I could, and Nelse from another point did the same."

"What did you make their force, Jack?"

"One hundred and eighty."

"And Nelse?"

"He said he counted critically one hundred and eighty-seven."

"Then that doubtless makes their force two hundred, for some you doubtless missed, or they were scouting."

"I set them at that number, Bill."

"There are five villages in the tribe, so each village sent a chief and forty men.

"That is a good force, but not large enough to enter upon more than a raid.

"Still this may be only one column, and there might be a large force out, for if each village sent two hundred, then the fort would have to look out."

"Yes; but I was careful to note that only one column left the mountains, for they would have to come out at the pass where they could cross the river, or, as you say, go a four days' ride around, and this they would only do in case of intending a complete surprise."

"You are right; we have only this column to deal with, I am sure."

"But they camped in Eagle Canyon?"

"Yes; they passed on up into the upper end—all except one person."

"Ah! was she along?"

"If by she you mean the wife of the renegade chief you had executed, she was."

"She halted at the graves there?"

"Yes; and tell me, which was her husband's?"

"There are a couple of soldiers' graves together, and apart some fifty feet the outlaws are buried, while under a large pine in the edge of the timber is the grave of the renegade chief."

"That one is the grave where we saw her, for Nelse and I left our horses and crept on into the canyon.

"She was kneeling by it, and we saw her raise her hands as though she was taking an oath.

"There was not a redskin in sight, so Nelse and I decided to capture the renegade queen.

"Great Caesar's ghost! but she was gorgeous, and the sun glistened upon her gold armlets, so it was a good spec any way to rope her in.

"We were going to creep around into the timber and come upon her while she was hugging her grief over her dead husband.

"It seemed a trifle mean, Bill, but we knew she was up

to deviltry, and would make the Sioux worse than ever Snow Face did."

"But you relented, it seems, as I see that you did not bring her in with you," said the chief, with a smile.

"Nary relent, Bill; but we gave over the idea just as we were about to begin business, for she suddenly got over her grief and blew a whistle that brought some mounted warriors down the canyon at a gallop.

"We feared she had seen us, so we lighted out, regained our horses and waited at a good place to ambush them for over an hour, when, sure that we were not followed, we decided not to monkey around any longer, but to come at once to you and report."

"Did you destroy your trail?"

"As well as we could, until we struck the buffalo trails."

"All right, we will be on hand to check these gentlemen, for I shall send a scout to Fort Fairview, another to the settlement, and one to each of the three posts, so they will be warned, and I will ask for Captain Forrester to join me with a hundred men and see if we can't capture this renegade queen, for she means mischief of the worst kind, Jack, and has simply gone to her husband's grave to renew the oath there that she made to me.

"But how was it she picked out his grave among the others?"

"Trust a woman for that, Bill, for they've got ways a man can never find out.

Buffalo Bill at once wrote several notes, and soon after five scouts rode away from the secret camp, and over beyond the lake took as many different trails.

Then Texas Jack started off after nightfall, accompanied by another scout, to report the movements of the Sioux, or if they still remained in Eagle Canyon.

The next day at noon the Texan and his companion returned in haste to the retreat and reported that the renegade queen and her braves had left the canyon and were heading toward Fort Fairview.

"To your saddles, Buckskins!" cried the chief, and before the order was obeyed there was a sight visible out upon the plains to rivet any eye.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BEAUTIFUL DECOY.

The sight which met the eyes of the scout was a horse and rider far away out on the plains.

A moment's observation showed two things, first, that the rider was coming on at the full speed of his horse, and next, that he was coming toward the ridge in the summit of which the Braves in Buckskin had their retreat.

The chief of scouts leveled his glass, and all stood hiding in the thicket, awaiting what he would say.

"It must be a soldier courier, for he is in dark clothes, and Indians are doubtless in chase of him, though they have not appeared in sight yet."

Still keeping his eye to his glass, Buffalo Bill called out a minute after:

"Ah! as I supposed, there come Indians in pursuit."

"How man, Bill?" asked Texas Jack.

Counting them slowly, the chief replied:

"Something over twenty, and I think there are no more behind.

"Go with the men, Neise, all of them, and cross the lake to the foothills.

"I will come soon as I see what those fellows are after, and, Jack, you stay here."

The men departed, having put their traps together for a stay away of several days, while Buffalo Bill wiped the glasses carefully and again turned it upon the fugitive.

"Jack!" he said, in a tone that fairly startled his companion.

"Well, Bill?"

"Have you heard aught of a wagon-train, Government's scouts, coming west just now?"

"No, but one may be on the way to the fort."

"One must be, for yonder rider is a woman."

"The mischief you say, Bill!"

"Yes, a woman in a dark riding habit, black slouch hat, and must be an officer's wife or daughter.

"Come, we must save her, Jack."

"We must at all hazards," and Texas Jack ran hastily after Buffalo Bill, who was already by the side of his horse.

Mounting, the two scouts rode at a swift gallop down the canyon, reached the lake and found Neise awaiting them with the boat.

"Men all across, Neise?"

"Yes, chief, and we'll soon be with 'em," and Neise seized the oars, while the scouts held the reins of their horses.

The horses swam well, and the island was soon reached, the boat put away and the animals saddled.

Reaching the spot where the Braves in Buckskin awaited them, Buffalo Bill said:

"Boys, be ready for a hard ride and a fight.

"The one we saw chased by Indians is a woman, and we must rescue her.

"Come."

The Braves in Buckskin mounted and followed their chief at a gallop around the base of the ridge.

Down through the foothills they went until they reached some timber which alone separated them from the rolling plain beyond.

Buffalo Bill dismounted and went on foot to the edge of the timber.

His glass showed him the horsewoman not half a mile away and riding toward a thick fringe of timber upon the banks of the prairie stream.

Behind came the Indians in full chase and gaining.

The cry of the scout brought his men to his side, Texas Jack leading the chief's horse, and leaping into his saddle he led his Braves in Buckskin to the rescue.

Away they dashed over the plain, to head the fugitive off, and meet her pursuers, though two to one against them.

The Braves in Buckskin counted no odds when going to the rescue of a woman.

Who she was, what she was, they did not ask, or care, so long as she was in desperate danger.

Like the wind the horses, thoroughly fresh, swept over the plain, while the riders cheered to encourage the fugitive, whose horse seemed to be rapidly failing.

Straight for the belt of timber they rode, and it soon became evident that they would reach it about the time the fugitive did, perhaps a little sooner, while the red-skin pursuers would arrive several minutes later.

"Once in the timber, Jack, and we can stand them off,"

said Buffalo Bill, as he went swiftly along, his rifle across his arm and ready for work.

"We can make it hot for them, Bill, and save the girl as well."

"Yes, but where are the rest of the band, for these are from the renegade queen's party?"

"Sure; but the rest may be still at the canyon and these be a scouting party; but where did that girl come from?"

"We will soon know," and with a cry to his men to push on, Buffalo Bill spurred forward, and an opening in the timber revealed the fugitive coming on, and the redskins but a couple of hundred yards behind her.

She was not that far from the creek, and the scouts were yet nearer.

"By heavens, Jack, see there! we are trapped.

"Halt! fire into the timber yonder, all of you, and ready about!"

The words of Buffalo Bill were caused by suddenly beholding in the timber a number of red forms around a pony which, forced to lie down in hiding, had suddenly sprung to its feet.

At the same moment the woman on horseback was seen to quietly draw rein, and seemed to pay no attention to the redskins in her rear.

"It is the renegade queen herself.

"Fire in the timber, pards!"

A volley of rifle shots rang out, aimed into the timber, and then a scattering fire from the repeating rifles followed.

But for the keen eyes of Buffalo Bill, who had recognized the renegade queen and detected the ambushed foe at the same time, the scouts would have dashed right on to certain death.

Then the rapid fire, so unexpected, from the scouts, had demoralized the redskins for a moment, and the Braves in Buckskin were in full flight before a return fire came from the Sioux, and when it did it fell short.

"A close call that, Jack."

"Yes, Bill; but the woman?"

"Is none other than the renegade queen."

"But she was dressed as an Indian girl when I saw her."

"Women change their dresses to suit their humor, Jack.

"Somehow she knew we were camped in the vicinity, and she put on a riding-habit and plotted to get us into an ambush.

"Those fellows in the timber were sent there last night, and she played the decoy to entrap us."

"And but for your so quickly recognizing the situation, would have done so."

"Yes; and I saw the trap none too soon.

"See! there the beautiful decoy sits on her horse directing her warriors, and she has sent half a hundred after us."

"See! they are dividing in two forces, Bill."

"Yes; and that means mischief.

"Can there be more of them in ambush in the foothills?"

"Yes; for see there!"

And Texas Jack pointed to two more bands of redskins, each half a hundred in number, coming out of the foothills from different points to head the scouts off.

CHAPTER XXII.

BLUE COATS ON THE TRAIL.

Affairs at the fort were progressing about as usual, the officers and their families trying to get all of the enjoyment out of their life on the border that was possible.

Colonel Cassidy, who had followed General Carr, a most popular officer, had proven himself a good commandant and was liked by all.

He seemed to particularly admire Kate Kennerley, and one evening as he called at Major Denton's and found the heiress alone, she asked him to sit down upon the piazza and await the return of the major and his wife, who had gone for a walk.

"How like your mother you are, Miss Kennerley," suddenly said the colonel.

"My mother! did you know her, sir?" eagerly asked the maiden.

"Yes."

"Oh, tell me of her!"

"Why, did your mother die before you could remember her?" he asked, surprised.

"Colonel Cassidy, all I know about my mother is that she was a Mexican.

"After her death my father took me to live in the City of Mexico, and then to the border, where he had a command, for he had entered the army.

"When he died, he sent to the United States, to my Uncle Lucius, who was stationed at McPherson, and he became my guardian.

"I hardly knew my uncle, and he was killed, you remember, nearly a year ago.

"Can you tell me more?"

"Your father was an officer in the army, and a gallant one; but he was taken prisoner during the Mexican war, and his life was saved by a Mexican lady; your mother was a Senorita Bonita Vilez, and your father loved her and they were married.

"Your father got a commission as commander of lanceros, and was stationed on the frontier, where I met him again, and your mother also.

"You were then a little girl of three years, and I am happy to renew my acquaintance with you again, and let me congratulate you upon being a true soldier's daughter."

"It is a pleasure to hear that you were my father's friend, for I have no one near me now whom I knew in the past.

"All are good to me, though, and I love dear old Major Denton and his beautiful wife as though they were really bound to me by kindred ties, and Mrs. Denton, you know, was my father's friend—but here comes Captain Forrester to see you."

And the young officer was seen turning into the avenue that led to "Fort Welcome," as Major Denton's hospitable home was called.

"And why not to see you, instead of me?" asked the colonel, with a suggestive smile.

"Ah! Captain Forrester, though ever polite, does not visit me.

"And then, I saw him go first to your quarters."

"I believe that you were his friend in all his trouble, Miss Kennerley?"

"Oh, yes; we at Fort Welcome never believed the

charges against him, black as they looked at one time; but there is always, I deem it, the stamp of innocence or guilt in one's face, and I could never read aught but 'Not guilty' in Captain Forrester's."

"You are right, for I so read it; but he is a splendid officer, and I rather admire his refusal to be friendly with those who made every effort to prove him guilty."

"Why, they still are trying to prove that there is something about the man, in spite of all charges being disproven."

"Yes, Colonel Cassidy, and I believe he will yet show that what seems mysterious in his actions now is not crime."

"You refer to this strange creature who twice deceived us all—first as the Boy Bugler and then as Miss Meserole?"

"Yes; and a remarkable, mysterious, beautiful creature she is," replied Kate Kennerley, lowering her voice, as the officer was now within a few yards of the piazza.

He saluted the commandant, raised his hat gracefully to Kate, and said:

"Pardon me for disturbing you, Colonel Cassidy, and you also I crave pardon of, Miss Kennerley, for breaking in upon the colonel's visit; but a courier has arrived from the Northwest and reports having crossed an Indian trail leading down from the mountains where the Sioux have their village."

"It was a trail, he said, made by fully a hundred warriors, so they must be on a raid, and as we have heard nothing from Cody, I was going to ask if I could not take three or four companies and go on a scout?"

"Certainly, Captain Forrester, you can go, and I am glad to have you, for I, too, am anxious about Cody, as we have had no messenger from him for ten days."

"There is some cause for alarm, sir, as those Indians are on the warpath, and were heading for the locality where I know Cody's retreat to be."

"Can I take Surgeon Powell with me, sir?"

"Well, yes, as the assistant surgeons can look after the fort; but why take four companies?"

"They were reported, sir, about a hundred strong, and of course must be moving in large force, with other columns as well."

"I hardly think so, for since Buffalo Bill so summarily executed their renegade chief, Snow Face, they have been cowed."

"His wife remains, sir, the renegade queen."

"Nonsense! what can a woman do as the head of a tribe of redskins?"

"Much, sir, if she is a woman bent on mischief, and has ability, added to the spirit of revenge, as I heard from Cody is the case with this fair renegade."

"Women can do much, Colonel Cassidy, for evil, when they set their hearts upon it," was the rather earnest response, and somehow into the minds of both the colonel and Kate came the thought of the woman who had masqueraded as the Boy Bugler and Miss Meserole.

"I still believe the Sioux will not send out more than a raiding party so two companies will be sufficient, I think."

The young officer bowed, as though the last remark settled the matter, and asked:

"Can I depart at once, sir?"

"Certainly."

"With no time limit to return, sir?"

"I leave that to you, Forrester, and success to you."

"Thank you, sir," and with a bow the officer was turning away when Kate Kennerley said, as she extended her hand:

"And I, too, say success to you, Captain Forrester—good-by."

He grasped her hand, turned and was gone, and Kate Kennerley saw him ride out of the fort half an hour after with eighty bluecoats following him.

"Somehow I wish the colonel had allowed him to take more men," she muttered, as from her window she saw the troopers disappear over a rise in the prairies, and a moment after she added, in a low, earnest tone: "I would give much to read the secret the heart of that man holds."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BLUECOATS TO THE RESCUE.

The face of the young captain, as he rode out of the fort, after leaving Colonel Cassidy and Kate Kennerley, was a study.

"Frank, I wish the colonel had allowed me to take four companies," he said.

"You asked him?"

"Yes, and he said two were enough; but I swelled the force all I could, and, as you see, besides my own company, took picked detachments from the others, and I have four-score as gallant fellows as ever wore spurs."

"You have indeed, Fred," said Surgeon Frank Powell, glancing admiringly over the men behind him.

There was Captain Alfred Tabor, of B Company, with six of his own men, and the detachments from the others of the regiment, and with him were two lieutenants, both daring, dashing officers.

"A" company, "Forrester's Own," as it was called, had forty men in the ranks, two lieutenants, and the non-commissioned officers.

There were therefore in the command, with commissioned and non-commissioned officers, just ninety men, and Black Bird, Surgeon Powell's negro servant, black as ink, immense in stature, and brave as a lion, brought up the rear with two pack-horses in lead, while there were for the other officers and men four large mules bearing packs, for Fred Forrester always looked to the comfort of his soldiers.

"You dread that the reds are out in force, then, Fred?" said Frank Powell.

"Yes, for I feel sure that Buffalo Bill has all his men busy, or we would have heard from him."

"I only hope he has not been overwhelmed."

"So do I; but Bill is not the man to be caught in a trap, though we are all of us liable to get into trouble some day."

"I am glad I have you along, Frank, for you are worth a dozen men, and I feel that my command is good for thrice their number, at least."

It was the next morning, as the squadron was moving along on the trail, that a horseman was seen coming toward them at a gallop.

"It is a scout, and one of Cody's; yes, it is Lucky Luke," said Surgeon Powell.

And soon after the horseman dashed up and, saluting, said:

"Going to the fort, sir, with dispatches from Chief Cody, to report redskins in force on the warpath, and four other scouts sent to the different posts."

"All right, Luke; but where is Buffalo Bill?" asked the captain.

"Left him at the retreat, sir; and he was to take the trail with the balance of the boys."

"Then I shall find him in that neighborhood?"

"Yes, sir; thereabouts—any word to send, sir?"

"Only say to Colonel Cassidy that you found me this far on my way, and I will feel obliged if he will send Captain Bainbridge with two other companies to support me.

"I will meet them, or have a messenger there to do so, at Sentinel Hill."

"Yes, sir."

And Lucky Luke shot away on his ride to the fort, while the pace of the troopers was hastened to a trot.

It was in the afternoon, as they were moving along after an hour's rest, when shots were heard not a mile away.

Instantly came the order to prepare for hot work, and a halt was ordered.

The saddle-girths were tightened, the weapons loosened in scabbard and holster, and the men mounted ready for the charge.

On they went at a sweeping gait, while the firing continued, and grew louder and louder.

They were in a valley, a prairie vale, with a stream upon one side and a ridge of timber upon the other.

Beyond was a plain with a large stream, the banks heavily timbered, and a ridge, fringed with a thicket that was very dense in growth, and from the latter a long string of Indian horsemen were emerging and moving toward the river.

From the latter had come a party of horsemen, ten in number, and they were whites.

Behind them, in full pursuit, were fourscore Indian warriors, mounted, and with yells dashing swiftly along.

Thus was the small band of horsemen caught between two bodies of foes, and had to fight a force of twenty to one against them.

Over in the timber the keen eye of Captain Forrester detected other foes, but how many he had no means of knowing.

The small band of pale-faces were the Boys in Buckskin, and that there was no hope for them they seemed to realize, for instead of pushing on, as though to break through the Indian line ahead of them, they suddenly huddled together into a solid mass, halted and faced their enemies.

Buffalo Bill and his Braves in Buckskin were at bay. Captain Forrester had halted his men before dashing through the timber into view.

He had ridden on with Frank Powell, dismounted and observed the situation.

"Brave Cody! they have brought him to bay, and he intends to die game, for he knows not we are near."

"No, and the redskins do not know, either, so we will gain a surprise."

"How many, at a rough guess, are they?"

"I should say all of two hundred, with more counties to hear from," replied Frank Powell.

"I would fight them to save Cody and his Boys in Buckskin, were they a thousand.

"Attention, battalion! forward, march!"

His voice rang out and the soldiers came on to where he sat on his horse with the Surgeon Scout, awaiting them.

Then came the order in trumpet tone:

"Charge!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RENEGADE QUEEN'S BOLD PLOT.

The Red Eagle was the king of trailers.

He had won fame in the village of his people when a mere boy by his success as a hunter.

He trapped game and kept his mother's tepee supplied, while others of his elders could not do so.

He killed his first bear when but thirteen, and saved the life of a wounded chief by doing so.

His father was a great chief, and upon the day of the child's birth had killed a red eagle, one of whose feathers by some freak were of a reddish-brown instead of gray.

This gained for the boy his name of Red Eagle, and on that same day of his birth the Sioux had gained a great victory over their foes, the Cheyennes.

When but sixteen the boy had taken his first scalp, that of a Pawnee chief, and so he won his spurs, and before the age when an American boy can vote, he was a chief, and a noted one.

Tall, an athlete in form, with a bold face and piercing eyes, a voice low and mellow in conversation, and like a trumpet in anger, Red Eagle was the idol of the Sioux maidens.

But, from the coming of the renegade queen among his people, he had had eyes for her alone.

She was the wife of his great chief, Snow Face, who, taking a fancy to the young Sioux, had done much to advance him; but he loved the beautiful Cruel Face.

She was a pale-face, he a redskin, yet she was his idol, and he was her slave.

She knew his regard for her, though he had never uttered a word to her of it, and so she made use of him and he enjoyed serving her.

He did for her what he would have had one of his warriors do for him; but she flattered his vanity by making him believe that no one else could accomplish what she asked of him.

So he had gone upon the trail to discover if there were pale-face scouts about, between her and the blows she would strike.

His quick glance had caught the trail leading from the canyon, and he had followed it, for he knew that it was a fresh one.

He had tracked the two riders, Texas Jack and his companion, to the shores of the lake, and he had seen them in a boat, while their horses swam.

So he had boldly hidden his outer costume and entered the lake to solve the secret of the retreat, and he had done so.

Unseen even by the eagle-eyed scouts, who suspected no foes' presence, he beheld their camp and also saw the tall, never-mistaken form of the chief, Buffalo Bill.

He had won a triumph, and back on the trail he went.

He made the long swim down the lake, removing his

costume and arms, and mounting his horse set out for the Eagle Canyon.

"The Red Eagle has returned soon," said the renegade queen, when he appeared before her.

"The Red Eagle has news for the ears of the Cruel Face."

"So soon?"

"The Red Eagle does not crawl when the Cruel Face bids him run.

"He found a trail, of two white braves, and they were in the Eagle Canyon; they saw the Cruel Face at the grave of the dead chief, and they went to tell their chief all they had seen, that the Sioux, with the renegade chief at their head, were on the warpath.

"The Red Eagle followed their trail by land and water, and found the hidden camp of the great scout, Pa-he-has-ka,* and his scouts—so many the eyes of the Red Eagle saw," and he held up his hand three times to denote fifteen.

"The Red Eagle is a great chief, and he could return to the retreat of the Pa-he-has-ka?"

"Yes, and the braves of the Cruel Face can wear the scalps of the white trailers at their belts.

"But their retreat is a strong one, and it would be good to bring them out, for if they saw from hill lookout a few redskins upon the plain they would come out to capture them, and the braves of the Cruel Face could be in ambush and kill or capture all."

"The Red Eagle speaks with a wise tongue; but I will take another plan, for the Cruel Face will draw them out of their den.

"Let the Red Eagle listen."

"The ears of the Red Eagle are open."

"The pale-faces were my people, and I know them well, and in my pack I have a riding-suit such as the white squaws use when going on horseback.

"I will put it on and appear far off from the scout's hill, and have twenty of my braves in chase.

"They will see that I am a pale-face, and think that I am from some wagon train, and will come to the rescue.

"The Red Eagle must to-night place my other warriors in ambush in timber toward which I ride, and the scouts will dash upon them.

"Other braves can hide in other timber so as to cut them off, and the scouts will fall at the hands of my braves.

"Does the Red Eagle understand?"

"The Cruel Face speaks with the wise tongue of an old medicine-chief.

"The Red Eagle hears her words and will obey."

"But the Red Eagle must know that the Long Hair, the great pale-face chief, is to be taken alive.

"If a brave of my people harms him he shall die, for the white chief must go to the village of the Sioux, there to die.

"Let the Red Eagle tell each brave this."

"It is as the Cruel Face says, and the warriors must be on the trail with the night."

"It shall be so.

"Let my warriors prepare and my chiefs know the wishes of the Cruel Face."

The Red Eagle departed upon his errand up the canyon, while the renegade queen entered the cabin, and half an hour after appeared in a dark blue riding habit, black slouch hat and was ready for her work as a beautiful decoy.

While the scouts slept in security, little dreaming that Texas Jack had been trailed by the Red Eagle, the latter was quietly placing the braves in position for an ambush and the renegade queen was going to the position she intended to start from on her clever scheme to capture Buffalo Bill and his Braves in Buckskin.

That both the renegade queen and the Red Eagle did their work well the reader has already seen.

CHAPTER XXV.

A STRANGE COMBAT.

When Captain Fred Forrester and the gallant troopers dashed out of the timber with the ringing cheer of the gallant—th cavalry, they were well under a swift run before the Sioux seemed to realize that friends of the scouts were near.

"Steady, men! keep close, and follow me!"

Such were the orders given by the young commander of the troopers.

He was in his element now, for it was in scenes of deadly peril that he had won his rapid promotions to the rank of a captain years before his thirtieth year.

His handsome face was stern, his fierce eyes blazing, and his revolver was ready in his right hand, for it was with that weapon the bluecoats meant to do execution.

They saw that the redskins were more than two to one in sight, and there were more beyond the timber, but how many they neither knew nor cared.

"Oh, for four companies, now!"

"If Colonel Cassidy had only let me have them, we could sweep this field," said Fred Forrester to Surgeon Powell, who rode near him.

The face of the latter wore a smile.

He always smiled when danger was deadliest, and now he was going to the rescue of his best friend, Buffalo Bill.

Along the line in front of the men rode the other officers, eager for the fray, and the men followed, solid as a wall, a dangerous, death-dealing machine, they seemed.

The scouts, as I have said, had rallied in a group and stood at bay, with the redskins sweeping down upon them from four points of the compass, and redskins in force that was overwhelming.

But not a man flinched, and they would die there in their tracks, while many a warrior would keep them company.

Back in the timber Captain Forrester had left a corporal and two men, and the three negro servants, with the pack-horses, and with this exception all his force was taken to the rescue.

The cheer, ringing, encouraging to friend, defiant to foe, was the first intimation that the Sioux had of the presence of the soldiers on the scene.

Two more minutes would have hemmed in the scouts, whose rifles were already ringing out death-knells upon the enemy.

They were a solid, determined, desperate band, ready for the work of death.

Their volleys of rifle shots had rung out at long range,

*Buffalo Bill is known among the Sioux tribes as Pa-he-has-ka, which, interpreted, means Long Hair.—THE AUTHOR.

then at shorter range, ere they, too, saw the bluecoats, for they had not looked for aid, not expecting it.

Their voices arose in a wild yell at the sight, and their third volley was a terrible one, not from hope, but on account of nearer range.

The shots of the Indians, who were here and there with a carbine and rifle, with a few score revolvers, had not told on the scouts, for they reserved their deadly fire, remembering the order of the renegade queen.

Their arrows were sent in showers, but not to kill, only to intimidate, for they meant not to harm the long-haired chief of the scouts.

They preferred to take all alive, in fact, and believed their game surely entrapped.

The torture of half a score white men would be so grand an affair for their people up in the mountains to witness!

But as they pressed on, going toward a common center, the cheer of the Boys in Blue, rushing to the aid of the Braves in Buckskin, reached their ears with startling distinctness.

They all glanced wildly toward the timber, and the lines of redmen swerved, staggered and seemed to break in a dozen places.

The Red Eagle, in his fury at the coming rescue, wheeled his own braves into column and determined to ride down the scouts, while his voice rang out in an order for the other three chiefs to face the coming soldiers.

The order was quickly obeyed, and the soldiers found about a hundred and fifty warriors to charge down upon, while the group of scouts saw that they had to meet a red avalanche of death.

Over in the timber the renegade queen sat upon her horse, viewing, as she believed, the certain capture of Buffalo Bill, and the utter annihilation of his band.

Suddenly a redskin brave rode up to her and said a few words in a hasty manner, at the same time pointing back over the plains.

There were with the renegade queen the score or so warriors who had been in the chase after her, and they were resting their ponies after the hard run.

This was the force seen by the soldiers, and gave reason for the belief that there were many more warriors there to dash out and come to the relief of their comrades who were charging down upon the scouts.

When the renegade queen heard the report of the Indian courier, who had just come into the timber, she smiled triumphantly and glanced out upon the prairie beyond.

"The great medicine-chief, Red Tomahawk, back at the village, had become fearful of harm to the queen of the Sioux, and had sent the Chief Wild Buffalo with many braves to follow the trail of the Cruel Face."

At another time the renegade queen might have been angered at the coming upon her trail of another force, but now, as the scouts must be taken, and no chance for one to escape, she was glad of the coming of the Wild Buffalo, who she knew must bring as large a force as her own.

Then, too, flushed with the hope of present victory, with four hundred warriors at her call, she could extend her raid and make the soldiers in the forts even tremble at her power.

So she told the Indian courier to go and hurry the warriors on, and as he darted away her ears caught the ringing cheers of the soldiers, and she beheld them dash out of the timber.

Her face became livid with passion, and she bit her lips nervously.

Then she said through her shut teeth:

"My God, am I to be foiled?"

"No; my own braves are more than two to one against them, and the Wild Buffalo will soon be here.

"There are not four-score of those bluecoats—unless there are more back in the timber."

Calling to one of her braves, she bade him ride like the wind and bring the Wild Buffalo and his warriors in all haste to the scene, and mentally she thanked the old medicine-chief for having sent the extra force on her trail.

In the meantime the Red Eagle and his band of fifty were almost upon the scouts, who still stood at bay, and the other three bands and the troopers were not two hundred yards apart.

Nervously glancing over the plains the renegade queen saw that the Wild Buffalo and his braves were in sight a third of a mile away, and pressing their tired horses on with all speed.

A cry of joy broke from her lips as she saw, too, that the force of Wild Buffalo must be even larger than her own; and she cried, savagely:

"With five hundred warriors I will yet have my revenge!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

FIGHTING AGAINST ODDS.

When the renegade queen gave utterance to the threat of revenge, which the presence of five hundred warriors would enable her to accomplish, she saw that Wild Buffalo had in his force nearly three hundred braves.

Her practice in seeing warriors massed since a dweller among the redskins, enabled her to get a very fair estimate at a glance of those coming to her aid.

She took in the situation with the eye of a skilled officer, and saw that if the troopers broke the line of Sioux they would stampede, while if Red Eagle did not ride down and capture Buffalo Bill and his scouts, the victory for her would be lost, but for the coming of Wild Buffalo and his reinforcements.

So she rode out of the timber to urge on the coming braves, and seeing her they uttered a wild war-cry and spurred on their ponies the faster.

Again in the timber, the renegade queen beheld what she had feared, that the mass of warriors went down before the charge of the troopers.

The redskins opened fire first, and brought down and wounded a few riders and their horses; but the soldiers did not heed this, and in another moment came the order from Fred Forrester:

"Fire!"

He had before had the troopers bring their carbines to a ready, and the volley was a severe one, for redskins and ponies bit the dust.

Then the carbines were slung at their backs, and the revolvers opened sharply when the order came:

"Use your revolvers now, men, and shoot to kill!"

This rattling and deadly fire, followed by the cheering,

dashing, irresistible avalanche of horses and riders, broke the Indian line, and they fled, rallied, broke again, and then stampeded toward the timber, to suddenly be checked as the renegade queen dashed into view waving her lance, and behind her came the tired, panting force of Wild Buffalo.

"Halt! and use your carbines now," shouted Fred Forrester, as he beheld this new force, and which checked his pursuit of the redskins.

The order was obeyed, and a rattling fire was opened upon the timber, the young officer calling out:

"Don't fire near that woman, men!"

In the meantime Red Eagle, with the eye of his queen upon him, was rushing down upon the little band of scouts.

"Form a line, boys, and let your repeating rifles speak," said Buffalo Bill, who was at one end of the line, with Texas Jack at the other.

Had the scouts been armed with carbines, that would have ended their career; but each one had a repeating rifle, fired to kill, and the rapid, steady fire of a hundred shots broke Red Eagle's warriors all up.

Had, also, the force not been divided by the soldiers' coming, the scouts also would have been doomed; but fifty Indians were not enough to ride them down, and no one recognized the fact quicker than did Chief Red Eagle.

He saw that it was a defeat, and before the eyes of the renegade queen; but there was nothing to do but to get out of a bad situation as quickly as possible, as he saw the defeat of the other force left the soldiers and scouts with only his broken half-hundred between them.

It is true a couple of scouts fell, and two more were slightly wounded, while half a dozen of their horses went down; but the remainder were not to be easily overrun, and his own force had suffered heavily.

Suddenly Buffalo Bill dashed out and captured two Indian ponies, and Texas Jack caught another, while a fourth trotted up to where the scouts stood at bay and was taken.

This mounted the riderless scouts, and the saddles were quickly changed from the dead to the living animals, and the two scouts who had fallen, one dead, the other wounded, were placed behind the couple of slightly wounded Boys in Buckskin.

Then the chief gave the order:

"Forward, and we'll reach that gallant band of soldiers!"

And he added:

"I fear they have gotten into trouble, for, Jack, do you see that other column of Sioux?"

"I see them, Bill."

"The queen comes well supported, and will give us a hard fight of it, if she don't worst us, for Forrester has not a hundred men."

"You are right; but he'd fight them, Bill, if he did not have half a hundred."

"You are right, and what a splendid charge he made."

"I nearly let that Indian chief get hold of me in watching it, and the fellow seemed bullet-proof, for I sent three shots squarely at his head."

"And clipped his feathers, for I saw them fly."

"But I thought he had you, Bill—See there!"

The last remark was caused by suddenly seeing the

renegade queen ride out of the timber, with the Sioux at her back.

"Men, we must join the gallant Braves in Buckskin—forward!" and Captain Forrester led the charge down toward the scouts, who, hampered as they were, came on but slowly.

In the meantime a corporal had been sent back to the timber in their rear, with four wounded men, who were yet able to ride, and two dead soldiers, but this move seemed to be unnoticed by the redskins, for no effort was made to flank them.

Down toward the scouts, distant some five hundred yards, rode Fred Forrester and his soldiers, and a wild cheer broke from the lips of the troopers, a yell of triumph from the Braves in Buckskin, as the forces united.

"Bravo, Captain Forrester!"

"I knew you were the only man that dared do what you did," and Buffalo Bill grasped the young officer's hand.

"I had started out to look you up, Bill, and met you courier, so pushed on."

"How many redskins have you in front?"

"About five hundred, I guess, sir, minus a score you men and mine killed; but let us show a bold front, sir, and move toward them, for they are preparing to charge and surround us."

"All right, Cody, and we will have to fight to the death for this looks bad for us; but I am one to never say die until after the funeral," and the young captain laughed recklessly, while Surgeon Powell rode up and warmly shook hands with Buffalo Bill, and said:

"You made those fellows fly about like they had struck a stone wall, Bill."

"Have you any more men, captain?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"I left a corporal and two men, with three negroes at our pack-horses, in the timber, and just sent five wounded men back there—that is all."

"Then we have to fight to the death, sir."

"Yes, and will; but I only wish Colonel Cassidy had given me the other two companies I asked for, and a six-pound gun I intended to have brought, and yonder redskins would be taught a bitter lesson."

"The renegade queen, the wife of Snow Face, is in command."

"Yes, I saw her; but let us move."

And the order was given to march, and, with the scouts on either wing, the Boys in Blue advanced toward the timber, firing their repeating rifles and carbines as they advanced.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A BUGLE CALL.

The renegade queen was somewhat surprised at the bold move of the troopers advancing upon her with the small force.

It also seemed to surprise her chiefs, and the suspicion was that it would indicate that the redskins had not yet met the full force of soldiers—that there were more yet to come.

It was a bitter blow to the renegade queen to see the soldiers and Braves in Buckskin united, for it showed her that to gain her revenge she must capture all, and the nerve she had seen shown by the whites already convinced her that this would be no easy task.

She could not, however, blame her chiefs, Red Eagle and Panther Eye, for they certainly had planned well and done their best, and she held out her hand to each one as he came up with his broken force to show that she held no ill will.

Still, renegade though she was, she yet could not but admire her own race for the magnificent courage shown, and a sigh broke from her lips that a cruel destiny had forced her to become what she was.

Panther Eye and his horses, in straggling groups, had first reached the timber, just as Wild Buffalo and his warriors had arrived, and they were all checked by the woman, until a few minutes after Red Eagle and his band came up.

She had noted the fact that the Red Eagle had dashed into the midst of the scouts and yet escaped, so she was not surprised to see a wound upon his forehead, where a bullet had cut its way, and that his left arm hung limp by his side.

But Red Eagle did not seem to notice his wounds, a third one from a bullet being in the fleshy part of his thigh.

The renegade queen had extended her hand to Chief Wild Buffalo as he came up, and a wave of her hand had arrested his charge.

He was a large, evil-faced Indian of forty, and yet he had a record second only to Red Eagle.

"The great Chief Wild Buffalo is welcome, and the Cruel Face thanks the mighty medicine-man, Red Tomahawk, for sending him and his brave warriors to her aid, and they will be repaid by many scalps."

The chief seemed pleased at his welcome, and the Red Eagle then came up and was greeted, but his face was stern, his eyes glittering.

"The Panther Eye and Wild Buffalo will place their braves yonder, on either side, while the Cruel Face dresses the wounded arm of the Red Eagle," the woman said; but the chief drew back and said:

"No, the Red Eagle is no child to cry with pain, and his enemies are before him.

"Will the Cruel Face let the Red Eagle lead her warriors against the pale-faces, for she must not face the bullets?"

The woman smiled, and replied:

"The Red Eagle does not know the Cruel Face, for she will lead her warriors, and no bullet will harm her.

"See! the pale-face soldiers advance, so let my warriors be ready."

The situation was a strange one, and a thrilling one as well.

The Indians who had been beaten off in the one case, and failed to capture the scouts in the other, had gained renewed courage with the arrival of Wild Buffalo and his band.

The latter had ridden hard, for the medicine-chief, Red Tomahawk, had pretended to see signs in the moon and stars that the renegade queen was in danger, so had dispatched the Wild Buffalo to her aid with all haste, and the chief had spared neither pony or brave, and arrived just as he was needed most, so his horses and men were tired and hungry, almost broken down when they reached the timber.

The truth was that old Red Tomahawk had yielded

his command of the Sioux in the field to Snow Face, to whom as well as to the fair renegade, he owed his life when captured by the whites.

But though he had trusted the white chief, knowing him to be cunning and brave, he feared that the renegade queen would not be able to meet an emergency, and hence had sent the Wild Buffalo and three hundred braves as a better protection to her.

They had arrived almost broken down, both braves and ponies, and found the force of the renegade queen beaten off; but they were united, confident of victory, and so formed for a battle with the whites, whom they outnumbered as six to one.

Determined to encourage her warriors, for she knew she had a brave force to meet, though a small one, the renegade queen took the center of her line, and with Red Eagle near her, to lend his aid and advice, she advanced to meet the coming force, but going slowly so as to have a reserve in the timber to retreat to, should the soldiers show a heavier force than now appeared, and which their boldness led her and the chief to believe they had.

Suddenly the carbines and rifles of the troopers and scouts poured a volley into the force of the Sioux, and warriors and ponies along the line dropped dead and wounded.

But the renegade queen noted the fact that no one fell very near to her, but to each side of her, some fifty or more feet away, the fire of the whites had been directed.

With wildest yells the Sioux pressed on, and were answered with a cheer from the soldiers, the war-cry of the Braves in Buckskin, and a terrible volley of bullets.

The line of redskins swerved and staggered, but still held on, and the renegade queen saw that they were badly hurt.

The soldiers halted and gave another fire at long range, steadily and well aimed, and then drew their revolvers and the command came for a charge.

The redskins must be checked, their line broken, or their entire strength would overwhelm the gallant little band.

This caused the Sioux to waver and halt, they preferring to meet the attack at a standstill, and surround the whites.

But the renegade queen dashed forward with a cry, and they beheld her lance with its streamers going right down upon their foes, so with an appalling war-cry they, too, rushed on.

The young commander saw that his force must not be broken, or all were doomed.

But just then, back in the timber from whence the soldiers had come, arose the loud and ringing notes of a bugle.

It was blowing a charge, and above the din of battle it was heard, while two horsemen dashed out of the timber, one waving his sword as to the others to come on, the other the bugler, who still sent his wild notes for support over the field.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A STRANGER "CHIPS IN."

"In Heaven's name, what help is that?" cried Fred Forrester, as the bugle notes reached his ears.

"The general relented, perhaps, and sent you the other two companies, sir," responded Captain Alfred Tabor, of B company.

"Heaven grant it, for we need them; but help has surely arrived, for see there!"

Out of the timber now appeared horsemen from different points, turning their horses, darting about and waving their swords, as though ordering men into line.

At the same time a horseman, evidently a dispatch bearer, came riding like the wind down toward the soldiers at bay, waving his hat as he came.

This was too much for the redskins, for the first blast of the bugle had checked their advance, and now they felt sure that a large force had come, or was near, coming to the rescue.

Their ponies, or those of Wild Buffalo's band, were broken down, and their riders almost used up as well, so they wished to retreat while they could, and the Red Eagle looked anxiously toward the renegade queen.

"Will my braves retreat from a foe?" she asked, with sarcasm which the chief flinched under, for he read aright her smile of scorn.

"There may be more foes than the Cruel Face has warriors, and to wait may be to lose her and all her braves with her.

"The Red Eagle is ready to die for the Cruel Face, but not to see her again among her people, who would kill her."

This settled it, and the Sioux retreated rapidly to the timber.

Nor did they halt there, for they knew that position could be flanked, might already be, as they could not see beyond the rise of prairie.

So they pressed on rapidly through the timber, crossed the plain to the ridge and disappeared beyond it, for out of the woods they had left they saw the troopers following, stretched out in a long line, and they felt sure that it was a large force upon their track, perhaps heavy enough to follow them to their village and threaten it with attack.

And the force which had thus turned the tide?

What was it?

Two men!

Only two and no more.

When the corporal and his four wounded returned to the timber, where they had left their pack-horses and servants under a guard of three men, they beheld there two persons who had just ridden up to the camp.

The first was a young man with a smoothly-shaven face, full of fearlessness, and with a striking perfection of feature.

His hair was cut short and clustered in curls about his temples, while his eyes were blue and very expressive, with a brightness about them that showed a spirit it would not do to arouse to anger.

He was dressed in a corduroy suit, which fitted well his fine form, wore top boots, a belt of arms encircled his waist and a repeating rifle hung at his back.

His companion was a Chinaman, over six feet in height, with massive shoulders, and he was dressed in a suit of buckskin which gave him an odd appearance.

His pigtail was stuck into a pouch on the back of his blouse, and his head was surmounted by a broad-brimmed sombrero.

He, too, was well mounted, but he showed no belt or arms, yet a repeating rifle was strapped to the saddle of pack-horse which he led, and could be quickly brought into use if needed.

The appearance of these two in camp was a surprise to the soldiers and the servants.

But the white man said, quickly:

"Are there other soldiers in reserve, corporal, to go to the aid of those gallant fellows?"

"I am sorry to say not, sir," responded the corporal with marked respect, for there was something in the look and tone of the speaker to command it.

"Heaven help them, for there are more redskins coming yonder, as I flanked them, and their force is larger than the one now engaged with the soldiers.

"We must do something to save them, corporal."

"What can we do, sir?"

The other corporal and his wounded comrades rode up at this minute, and they told most truly that the situation for the soldiers was growing desperate each moment.

"Men, you must let your wounds go, for a while, and help me.

"It will be your only chance to save yourselves, for the defeat of your comrades means death to you also.

"Will you obey my orders?"

"Gladly, sir!" cried both corporals, only too glad to have a leader.

And the wounded men also rallied under the words in a manner of the stranger.

"Then give me your bugle, my man, and one of your lend me a uniform coat and hat."

The bugle was instantly handed to him, and Black Bill ran up with Surgeon Powell's fatigue coat and cap, saying, quickly:

"Take dose, sah, for dey belongs to my boss, and he about your size, so dey'll fit yer, sah."

"I do not care for a fit just now, my man; but they will do well."

And in an instant the stranger had put on the coat and hat.

Then he wheeled his horse and, dashing to the edge of the timber, placed the bugle to his lips.

It only took a few notes to show that he was skilled in the use of the bugle, and he carefully noted the effect upon the redskins and soldiers.

"Ah! that is well—all of you men who are able to mount do so, and ride to different points along the timber, showing yourselves and waving your swords, as though you were officers hurrying troops on.

The order was obeyed, and the edge of the timber soon presented a very animated scene, as the soldiers were doing all in their power to carry out the ruse of the gallant stranger, to deceive the redskins, yes, and the soldiers too.

"Bugler, make an effort and come down to me here," cried the stranger from where he was seated upon his horse.

The bugler was helped to his saddle by the Chinaman and rode out to the stranger.

"Take the bugle and continue to blow the calls the best you can.

"Here, Chinnee, come here with a rush!"

Out dashed the Chinnee, and the order came:

"Ride to the end of the line and back again. Tell the corporal to come here, and then do you run back and forth as though carrying orders.

"Do you understand?"

"Allee samee likee 'Melican man, bossee," and away the Chinaman rode down the line, and the corporal soon appeared.

"Go back into the timber and I will come and give you this coat and hat, and you ride out and play commander, and the bugler will keep near you.

"I will come out at a run and then dart away like a courier to the command yonder, and have the soldiers also come back and forth."

"Yes, sir," and the corporal followed the stranger into the timber, the exchange was made of coat and hat, and the corporal rode back in full view of the Indians and soldiers.

Then the stranger went up to him at a run, halted an instant, and driving spurs to his horse dashed over the plain to the gallant band of soldiers who were wondering at the strange maneuvers in the edge of the timber, and where the reinforcements had come from.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MYSTERIOUS RESCUER.

The situation had suddenly changed for the soldiers, and they drew long sighs of relief, though they did not weaken in their determination to die in their tracks if need be.

The Indians were in full retreat, and the soldiers doggedly following them when the supposed courier dashed up.

He cast his eye over the party, signaled out the commandant, and, saluting, politely said:

"I am sorry I have not to report reinforcements, sir, so please make the best of your favorable opportunity for retreat."

"Not to report reinforcements, sir?"

"Why, surely there are troops in yonder timber, but where from I cannot guess," said Fred Forrester, in surprise.

"There are only the few men you left there, and sent back wounded, excepting myself and my Chinese servant, sir."

"Do you mean this has all been a make-believe arrival of relief?"

"Yes, sir."

"Instigated by whom, sir?"

"I saw your desperate situation, sir, so made an effort to deceive the Indians by donning a uniform coat and hat loaned me by a negro, and also blowing the bugle calls, for I happen to know them."

"You deceived us as well, sir; but you are not a soldier, are you?"

"No, sir."

"My name is Forrester, captain of A Company, —th Cavalry, and I am happy to meet you, sir, and thank you for your service, for I believe every man of us here owes his life to your presence of mind and daring," and Captain Forrester extended his hand, while the stranger grasped it, with the remark:

"I am glad to feel that I have served you, sir."

"My name is Roy Rockland, and I am a gentleman at large, rover at will, and gambler by profession."

A smile crossed the face of Fred Forrester at this introduction of himself by the stranger, and he replied:

"I certainly am glad that your roving propensities brought you this way, Mr. Rockland; but permit me to present Surgeon Powell of Fort Fairview, Captain Tabor of the —th Cavalry, and William Cody, chief of scouts, and better known as Buffalo Bill.

"My other officers I will present when they come up to us."

The stranger raised his sombrero, and then accepted the outstretched hands of the surgeon and scout, while he replied:

"I have knocked about the frontier some little; so, of course, know of Buffalo Bill and the Surgeon Scout, while the name of Captain Fred Forrester is by no means unknown to me.

"But permit me to suggest, sir, that you let those Sioux believe you intend a hot pursuit and really have reinforcements."

"Thank you for the suggestion, Mr. Rockland, and I will at once follow your advice."

This Captain Forrester did by sending Buffalo Bill, four scouts and Captain Tabor with his company to follow the redskins for at least a mile or two, while with the others he removed his dead and wounded to the ridge, where he had left his small reserve.

The party who went on the trail of the Sioux soon came upon a form lying in a thicket.

"It is a chief, and he is badly wounded, so I will send him back to Surgeon Powell," said Buffalo Bill, and he was placed upon a horse in front of a soldier, who had orders to take him back to the timber.

In the meantime, Captain Forrester had overlooked the situation, and finding that the position he occupied was a good one, with a brook of water near, and grass for the horses where they would not be exposed to a fire should the Sioux return, decided to remain there and send for reinforcements.

When the reinforcements came, a crushing blow was inflicted upon the Sioux, and one that they remembered for many a long day. The renegade queen had evidently given up, for the time at least, her trail of Buffalo Bill, for she retired to the depths of the Indian country and peace reigned in the vicinity. Roy Rockland from being an outlaw had by his rescue of Buffalo Bill, Captain Forrester and their men, become a hero and a respectable member of society, and he and his gigantic Chinese servant, who had accompanied him through all his ups and downs, were famous on the border for many years.

Bowie knife Bessie, who had saved his life, lived for some time as the queen of Pocket City, and afterward met the man she had saved.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 77, will contain "Buffalo Bill's Buckskin Band; or, Forcing the Redskins to the Wall." Roy Rockland, the former road-agent, became a warm friend of the scout, and assisted him in his great campaign against the Sioux, in which he finally broke the power of the tribe and brought the renegade queen to bay. How he did it will be told in next week's issue.

CURIOUS DREAMS



Here are a few stories, boys. Peculiar dreams, and interesting, every one of them.
The contest will soon be drawing to a close, so get into it; everybody.
See page 31 for particulars.

Disappointed.

(By L. Haiber, Ohio.)

One cold, dreary winter's night I sat by the fireside reading a Buffalo Bill story, when some of my chums came to spend the evening with me.

We started to talk about gold and where it is found. We kept it up till I went to bed. I soon fell asleep and dreamed that my chums and I were digging for gold, and that we found it in large quantities, and we started to quarrel over it.

I grabbed the bags the gold was in and started to run, but my chums got me down and tried to get the gold, but I held to it all right.

When I awoke I found my mother shaking me to try to awake me. My hands were still clinched, but when I opened them I found no bags of gold.

A True Dream.

(By J. Lynch, N. Y.)

This dream I have to relate happened one year ago last winter. I dreamed that I was in the campus grounds at Ithaca, and one of the buildings was afire.

After a while I went up to it and found that it was the veterinary college.

I saw a man carried out whom the people said was dead. Then I saw a large piece of brick and stone falling right directly over me when, with a start, I awoke, and found I was only dreaming.

In the morning I was asked by my brother what I was dreaming about last night, and I told him. In the morning paper we saw an account of the veterinary college fire, which surprised me, and my brother, who said I was a fast night walker, to go to Ithaca and back with news of the fire in one night. This may seem like a make-up, but it is the honest truth.

My Hunting Dream.

(By Charles Menagh, Washington, D. C.)

I dreamed I was out hunting with a friend and we had used all our shot and were coming home, when a big black bear came running after us.

My friend got away, but I did not.

The bear chased me and I was getting out of breath when there appeared before me a tree.

I quickly climbed it and just as I was about to grasp the first branch I slipped and fell down toward the bear.

At the same time my body struck the bed and I awoke.

The Dream of the Cannibals.

(By G. Gordon, Pa.)

A few years ago I was traveling with my father in the West India Islands. Tales reached our ears of the terrible cruelty of the cannibals.

The report was that one of the governors of the islands was captured and eaten alive by them.

I was very much afraid of them coming and capturing us and eating us alive. I went to bed early, but could not go to sleep. I did so after a long time.

I dreamed that they had come to the cabin and killed my father and taken me on a litter to where there were more of them in a circle. I thought they were tall men with long hair, and wild-looking eyes.

I thought they set me down in the circle, where there was a large pot boiling. They danced around me with their spears for a long time; then one of them came to me and took my clothes off, and then they came to throw me into the big pot.

Just as they were getting hold of me I woke up. I ran to where my father was sleeping and told him my dream. He let me sleep with him the rest of the night.

HERE'S A NEW CONTEST! A CORKER!

The Contest just starting is going to be the greatest we ever ran. It's an entirely new idea. The Prizes are new and the finest we ever offered. The other contests held in the BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY have all made splendid success, but this one is sure to break all records. Why? Because it is a brand-new idea—a contest every boy in America has an equal chance in, and because the prizes beat anything ever offered before. All you have to do is to write out an account of any of your

Curious Dreams.

Everybody has had remarkable dreams, and anybody who sends in an account of one has a chance of winning one of the prizes. They consist of

THREE FIRST-CLASS PHOTOGRAPHIC OUTFITS,

Including Camera and all Appliances for Taking and Developing Photographs.

Five Hunting Axes and Five Hunting Knives.

Think of the fun you can have this winter with one of those cameras. You can take and develop photographs of all your friends. Full directions go with each camera. Think how useful and handy a first-rate hunting knife or ax will be when you go hunting or trapping in the woods this winter.

To Win a Prize.—Write an account of any curious or remarkable dream you have had—no matter what it was about. Tell it in five hundred words, and send it with the coupon you will find on this page, properly filled out, to the BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY, care of Street & Smith, 238 William St., New York City.

HERE IS A LIST OF THE PRIZES:

The three boys who send in the three most interesting accounts will each receive an **Eastman Pocket Kodak**, with complete outfit. The camera takes picture $1\frac{1}{2} \times 2$ inches; uses film, and has capacity for twelve pictures without reloading; weight six ounces. This wonderful little camera takes pictures equal to the most expensive. It makes negatives of such sharpness and definition that beautiful enlargements of any size can be made from them. Has perfect Achromatic Lens of fixed focus, Rotary Shutter, with sets of three stops, square View Finder, and covered with fine Seal Grain Leather. Takes snap shots or time exposures. Easily carried in pocket or on bicycle. Complete with roll of film for twelve exposures and Leather Carrying Case, with room for three extra film cartridges.

The five boys who send in the five next best accounts will each receive a **Safety Hunting Ax**. Dimensions over all 11×4 inches; weight 18 ounces. The blade is made of solid tool steel, finely tempered and highly polished. The handle is made of mild steel, nickle plated on copper, with handle plates of engraved hard rubber. The guard is of sheet steel, hinged on a spring in such a manner that either open or closed it is firmly held in position. The construction is unique

and of such a nature as to make it almost impossible for one part to become detached from another. The head has an oblong semi-circular recess milled in either side to receive the slotted end of handle, which is accurately milled to a close fit and firmly held by a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch steel screw. This method of handle fastening prevents any liability of the blade working loose on the handle. The upper part of the handle is slotted on the under side to receive the folded sheet steel guard, which is so arranged as to be firmly held by a flat steel bar when open or closed.

The five boys who send in the five next best accounts will each receive a **Sportsman's Ideal Hunting Knife**. There is about as much difference in point of utility and beauty between one of our "Ideal" hunting knives and any other knife on the market as there is between a grizzly bear and a porcupine. They are hand forged, hand tempered, hand tested by the rigidest possible test and finished in a manner that makes them the handsomest knives in the market. The "Ideal" knives are made with 5-inch blades, leather handle, brass and fibre trimmings, with polished stag-horn tip. A handsome black or russet case with each knife.

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Street and No.....
City or Town.....
State.....
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